

**Expatriatism: A New Platform for Shaping Australian
Artistic Practice in the Late Nineteenth
and Early Twentieth Centuries**

A Case Study of Six Artists Working in Paris and London

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Abstract

Expatriatism has become a fact of life for many Australian artists in the twenty-first century. For our painters and sculptors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, the experience of living and working abroad was a quite new phenomenon.¹ In the 1880s, with John Russell's historic journey to Belle-Île, a remote French island off the coast of Brittany, it became an emerging trend. Russell forged a pioneering path that many Australian artists followed until 1914, when the outbreak of the First World War provisionally brought expatriatism to an end.

This thesis focuses on Australian artistic expatriatism during the period 1880 to 1930, a highpoint for our early artists' engagement with the art worlds of Europe. Paris and London, then the two leading international cities to which most foreign artists flocked, are the principal cultural contexts for the six case studies in this thesis. The work of Rupert Bunny, Ethel Carrick, George Coates, Agnes Goodsir, Bertram Mackennal and John Russell is explored in order to investigate the extent to which expatriatism shaped their creative practice in their adopted cultures.

Past histories of Australian art have marginalised expatriatism because it happened 'over there' rather than 'here' and thus did not fit easily into the nationalistic and generally patriarchal narratives the writers constructed. More recent histories, especially those written over the past decade, have been more inclusive, and the subject of artists working abroad has grown to be a critical issue. The 'UnAustralian art' project considering the history of artistic interaction between Australia and the wider world by cultural theorists Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson has broken new ground,² and their account has been a vital touchstone for this thesis.

In addition to reassessing the value of expatriatism for Australian art, this thesis also addresses two other lacunae, namely the lack of consideration of expatriate women artists in most of the earlier histories and the examination of the subject from the expatriate viewpoint as opposed to the conventional approach through an Australian

¹ The painters Adelaide Ironside and Robert Dowling, in 1855 and 1857 respectively, and the sculptor Margaret Thomas, in 1867, blazed the expatriate trail for Australian artists.

² In a project ongoing since 2007, Butler and Donaldson have written various articles grouped under the title 'UnAustralian art'.

lens. Until the 1970s male writers penned the discourse on Australian art, which had the deleterious effect of presenting expatriatism as an exclusively masculine experience. This runs counter to my research showing that of all Australian artists travelling abroad prior to 1914 just over a third were women.³ Furthermore, most Australian literature has presented expatriatism from the homeland perspective, with little consideration of how the artists themselves experienced it. Adopting a method previously untested, a psychocultural approach, giving a central role to the interaction of psychological and cultural factors in the artists' encounter with expatriatism, I explore in this thesis how the major challenges of cultural assimilation and cultural hybridity impacted on the artists' experience, and their importance for their art. The research of key contemporary theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Gérard Bouchard, Montserrat Guibernau and Hajar Yazdiha underpins the investigation.

This thesis aims to discover and explain the extent to which the six selected artists adapted to the host cultures, and how this shaped their artistic practice. I demonstrate that each artist assimilated differently, with the degree of merging of his or her Australianness with foreignness (or in the case of Ethel Carrick her British–Australianness with French culture) the key to his or her success. Just as cultural hybridity delineated the experience of expatriatism for these artists, so too expatriatism has shaped the history of Australian art. This investigation reveals that it was vital in connecting our expatriates with remarkably progressive cultures, and through their experience and influence considerably broadening the local perspective by contributing a more cosmopolitan, cross-cultural approach to art in Australia.

³ My research shows that of the thirty-eight major Australian artists working in Europe during the period 1880–1914 thirteen were women, representing 34% of all expatriates.

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Introduction

The term *expatriate* has become something of a trope, its meaning reflecting the vicissitudes of time. In common usage it is often associated with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century transnational mass migration of the working class; in the late twentieth-century with a global market for skilled professionals or unskilled labourers working abroad on company assignments; at the start of the twenty-first century, asylum seekers and other refugees fleeing famine, war and ethnic conflicts and seeking a better life have become modern expatriates. Many of these émigrés did not assimilate, instead living in segregated communities or in relative seclusion from the local population and commonly only associating with their own group. This perception of the expatriate is still widespread.

In this thesis I investigate a different type of expatriate, one privately motivated to go abroad in the late nineteenth century to develop and enrich his or her artistic career. The six case study artists – Rupert Bunny, Ethel Carrick, George Coates, Agnes Goodsir, Bertram Mackennal and John Russell – all stayed long-term or permanently and successfully assimilated into their host cultures. For these practitioners, expatriatism granted unrestricted artistic opportunity and a cosmopolitan lifestyle in the world's leading cities of culture and art, Paris and London. The cultural impact of these centres was significant, strongly influencing how each artist responded to his or her transformed situation and its reflection in their art.

Russell's departure from Sydney in 1880 marks the beginning of this study, and the deaths around 1930 of three of the selected artists (Coates, Mackennal and Russell) signal its end. The research hypothesis informing the dissertation is

that the six case study artists were well placed to exploit expatriatism because of their preparedness to assimilate into the host culture and adopt hybrid identities as key constituents of the overseas experience. The study investigates *the extent to which each artist adapted to his or her adopted culture and how this shaped his or her creative practice*.

I argue that cultural assimilation empowered each artist to embrace the host culture as 'home', the outcome of a melding of two cultures – Australianness with

foreignness (British or French) – where neither culture was subsumed by the other, in a hybrid that mutually benefited both. While it may be thought that Australia was simply a British colonial outpost in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there had by this time emerged a distinctive sense of Australianness as endorsed by the movement for and ensuing founding of the Federation in 1901 and a rebelling against its ‘colonial’ status. Even when part of the Empire, Australians had always been regarded as ‘lesser’ by Britain. Each of the artists negotiated their expatriate position in different ways, their temperament, gender and insider/outsider disposition having an important impact on their engagement with the art worlds in which they worked. By investigating expatriatism through their eyes rather than via the conventional means of the Australian lens I shed significant new light on the subject.

Commentators on Australian visual culture have traditionally and almost invariably marginalised the art of our expatriates.¹ For most, their work did not count because it was not made here, this attitude effectively estranged it from Australian art history. Recent unnationalistic narratives such as the innovative ongoing history of ‘UnAustralian art’ by Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson have championed expatriatism in a positive way, revising past quarantined accounts. Their texts stimulated my interest in the subject and continued to motivate my thinking and writing during the course of this investigation.² Most accounts of expatriatism have also seen it as a primarily masculine phenomenon, when in fact a third of Australian expatriate artists pre-1914 were women. This thesis seeks to remedy this omission by considering two important female painters, Agnes Goodsir and Ethel Carrick.

¹ As noted in Chapter 1, art historians William Moore and Bernard Smith were exceptions, the chapters in Moore’s *The Story of Australian Art* (vol. 11) and Smith’s *Australian Painting 1788–1960* indicating an emergent awareness of the subject.

² Their writings on the subject include: Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson, ‘A short history of UnAustralian art’, in Ian North (ed.) *Visual Animals: Crossovers, Evolution and New Aesthetics* (Adelaide: Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia), 2007, pp. 107–22; Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson, ‘Stay, go or come: A history of Australian art, 1920–40’, in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* (Brisbane: Art Association of Australia and New Zealand), vol. 9, issue 1/2, 2008–09, pp. 119–43; Rex Butler, ‘On writing a history of UnAustralian art’, in *The Humanities in Australia: Taking Stock – The 40th Annual Symposium of the Australian Academy of the Humanities* (Canberra: The Australian Academy of the Humanities), 2009, pp. 17–20; Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson, ‘French, floral and feminine: A history of UnAustralian art 1900–1930’ (part 1), EMAJ: Electronic Melbourne Art Journal (Melbourne: Fine Arts Network), vol. 1, issue 5, 2010, pp. 1–30; and Rex Butler, ‘On writing a history of UnAustralian art’, in Ian Donaldson and Mark Finnane (eds), *Taking Stock: The Humanities in Australian Life since 1968* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press), 2012, pp. 173–81.

Reference is made to a diverse literature across art, sociology and philosophy, reflecting the mutual interdependency of these fields in relation to expatriatism. My research methodology employs a psychocultural approach, embracing the psychological, cultural and territorial dimensions of acquired identity to draw attention to expatriatism in shaping Australian artistic practice more than a century ago. I was not a direct witness to the experiences of which I write. My findings, therefore, necessarily incorporate some degree of subjectivity, which is offset by evidence and theory garnered from the primary and secondary sources cited. In interpreting the past from the present, I make no claim to speak for the artists. Their voices, hopefully, gently resonate through the text and in so doing augment the discourse on expatriatism, a theme of particular interest today given the increasing interconnection of different populations and cultures through the internet, mass media and international travel.

The thesis is divided into four parts. Part one encompasses the contextual chapter and parts two to four, sequentially titled ‘Paris’, ‘London’ and ‘London and Paris’, comprise two chapters apiece consistent with the cities in which each of the artists worked. The treatise is structured as seven themed but interlocking chapters examining the connections and dissimilarities between the experiences of each artist and how these impacted on their work, much of which I was fortunate to view during my research. In Chapter 1, I examine several key contextual issues relating to expatriatism. They include its significance as a research topic; the criteria and justification for selecting the six case studies; an overview of the historical and theoretical discourse surrounding the subject over the past 125 years; the cultural imperatives impelling Australian artists to travel abroad and the challenges faced once they arrived; and the locationist influences of Paris and London, the major global centres of expatriatism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The discussion of the selected artists in Chapters 2 and 3 – namely Rupert Bunny and John Russell – draws attention to the themes that constituted their transformative experiences in France. Over almost five decades Bunny passionately embraced French culture, championing the urbanity and cosmopolitanism of Paris in an exceptional unanimity that articulated the richness and profundity of his vision. This extended from the sensuous aestheticism of Symbolism, to the *luxe* of his ‘feminine

Arcady' series, to the merging of classicism with theatricality in the vibrant *Danse chromatique*. Assimilating influence defined Bunny's art, its authority fashioned by *fin-de-siècle* sophistication and escapism. Ultimately forsaking Paris Russell sought refuge in the rugged natural beauty of Belle-Île, off the coast of Brittany, where his visceral relationship with the spectacular La Côte Sauvage³ gave impetus to a remarkable body of Impressionist-inspired paintings. His deep emotional connection with this landscape is captured in the expressive and energetic brushstrokes and colour condensing the experience, a dynamic and powerful expression of his 'being'. Expatriatism offered Russell and Bunny exceptional opportunity from contrasting positions, Russell from the rural edge and Bunny from the urban centre. From this schism two diverse oeuvres emerged revealing achievements that substantially outshone those of other Australian contemporaries working in France at the time.

In Chapters 4 and 5, London is the cultural context for considering how expatriatism provided vital career incentives for two of Australia's foremost portraitists, painter George Coates and sculptor Bertram Mackennal. Both were colonial outsiders moving from the periphery to the 'heart of Empire'.⁴ Each utilised their British experience to exploit diverse cultural terrains within the stylistic conventions of early twentieth-century portraiture. Coates opted to portray society's marginal figures, mostly progressive and independent Edwardians, many of whom like him were foreigners or concerned with the arts. These were people with whom he readily connected during the course of his assimilation, the unassuming naturalism and low-key tonality of his English work corroborating the view that the portrait transaction between artist and sitter was one of unanimity and deference.⁵ Mackennal's due diligence and ingenuity led to prominent British insider success, resulting in coveted royal patronage. The artist strategically formulated this path, closely aligning himself with the New Sculpture movement and the Royal Academy, becoming, like Coates, firmly British–Australian. Two important sculptural commissions, the equestrian

³ La Côte Sauvage (Wild Coast) includes the spectacular cliff-edged coastline on the southwest side of Belle-Île, where Russell built his house.

⁴ Quoted from Charles Masterman's *The Heart of Empire* (London: Unwin), 1907.

⁵ However, Coates's official war portraiture completed in later years for the Australian War Memorial, Canberra and Canadian War Museum, Ottawa is less deferential because of the conventionalism and rigour imposed on the representation of the subjects by the commissioning institutions.

statue of King Edward VII at St James's in London and the tomb of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, are examined to highlight Mackennal's remarkable achievement in the international arena.

Chapters 6 and 7 approach expatriatism from the perspective of two women artists, Agnes Goodsir and Ethel Carrick. Both of these painters moved between England and France in their early careers before eventually settling in Paris, perhaps because liberal French culture best suited their long-term professional objectives. For Goodsir, expatriatism became a liberating journey for exploring her sexuality, using the authority of the portrait to fabricate identity. The *Muse androgyne*, a group of subtle yet penetrating portraits with her partner Rachel Dunn as its focus, was the impetus for her imagination, celebrating lesbianism and independence in the *joie de vivre* of 1920s Paris. In Chapter 7, I consider Carrick's work in terms of the erosion of the gendered separation of spheres in the early twentieth century. Carrick challenged this long-established tradition, inverting the 'spaces of femininity' by painting the world of women in public outdoor locations, conventionally the sphere of masculinity. Urban parks and marketplaces as well as the beaches of northern France became the principal subject matter for exploring spatial inversion during an intensely creative period, set against a cosmopolitan way of life. Feminism, modernism and assimilated identity, all products of Carrick's French expatriatism, activated her response, which may be seen as a retort to preceding Impressionism's invoking of *plein-air* masculinity.

Crossing national borders is a familiar occurrence in our early twenty-first-century globalised world, but for Australian artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was an infrequent and challenging experience. For the six artists comprising this study, expatriatism was a unique encounter, a critical melding of homeland and adopted cultures countenancing their sense of being 'at home'. Cultural hybridity authorised these artists to embrace expatriatism as a world stage, a new platform for shaping artistic practice, and their work forcefully articulates this through its strong cross-cultural and cosmopolitan focus.

Part One: Context

Chapter 1: Expatriatism

Introduction

In this chapter I examine several key contextual issues relating to Australian artistic expatriatism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These concerns provide the essential framework for my investigation of the six case-study artists in the subsequent chapters. The importance of expatriatism as a research subject is initially discussed. I then detail the criteria employed to select the case studies, which are subsequently listed, together with their expatriate histories. This is followed by an examination of the historical and contemporary theoretical discourse surrounding expatriatism in relation to the writings of selected critics, art historians and theorists from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century. The cultural imperatives that encouraged Australian artists to travel abroad and the challenges faced once they arrived are next examined, and finally the locationist influences of Paris and London, the major research sites for this study, are discussed.

Significance

Expatriatism refers to the state or experience of being an *expatriate*, a term originating from the Latin *ex* ('out of') and *patria* ('country or fatherland'). While in its broadest sense an expatriate is anyone 'living abroad, especially for a long period', in the artistic sense and for the purposes of this thesis, expatriatism denotes artists' living and working outside their country of birth to complete their training, further their career or gain new experience. Furthermore, the expatriate artist must have remained for the long term and assimilated into the host culture. According to Merriam-Webster, *expatriatism* first appeared in the English lexis in 1937,¹ around the same time that it emerged as an important subject of discussion in Australian art history.² However, expatriatism per se did not generate wide scholarly interest until the 1970s, as part of the broader debate about Australia's traditions and history (one

¹ Merriam-Webster Online, www.merriam-webster.com, accessed 30 November 2013.

² It appeared originally in William Moore's 'Artists abroad', in *The Story of Australian Art* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson), vol. 11, 1934. Facsimile reprint by Angus & Robertson 1980, pp. 1–24.

of the paradoxical legacies of the Gough Whitlam era), in what historian Russel Ward refers to as ‘the Australian legend or national mystique’.³ Cultural theorists, especially over the past decade, in championing a more inclusive history of Australian art have embraced the notion more critically (refer to ‘Historical and Contemporary Theoretical Discourse’ below).

In an increasingly globalised world expatriatism has become a fact of life for Australian artists in the twenty-first century. For our painters and sculptors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, expatriatism was a relatively new phenomenon. Three enterprising artists, Adelaide Ironside, Robert Dowling and Margaret Thomas, pioneered the path (to Europe) in the 1850s and 1860s, which John Russell’s landmark journey in the 1880s to Belle-Île, a French island off the coast of Brittany, revitalised. Russell established an emerging trend, which many important Australian artists followed until 1914, when the outbreak of the First World War brought expatriatism provisionally to an end.

Like many first-generation artists, Russell sought to make his mark within a wider world, free from the insular colonialism that had circumscribed his early life in Sydney. For other like-minded artists seeking a transformative experience beyond the margins of Australian culture, expatriatism became a vital means of escape from the economic and cultural hardships of colonial life. The journalist Richard Twopeny’s observation in 1883 that ‘Melbourne is quasi-metropolitan, while both Sydney and Adelaide are alike, provincial in their mode of life’,⁴ summarised the prevailing mood, which aspirant artists keenly felt.

For most Australian artists expatriatism was a leap in the dark, a daring step whose consequences were unpredictable. In repositioning themselves from the periphery to the ‘heart of empire’, expatriatism involved a huge leap of faith, a belief that the intangible world beyond could present exceptional opportunity. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that world was London and Paris, the internationally pre-eminent capitals of the two largest colonial empires of the time. The selected

³ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (London: Oxford University Press), 1970 (first published 1958), p. v.

⁴ Richard Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia* (London: Elliot Stock), 1883. Facsimile reprint by Sydney University Press, 1973, pp. 73–74.

artists were at the heart of the late-nineteenth century exodus, which saw countless artists from around the world head to these leading cultural hubs, in what for the fortunate few became both a lifetime and a life-changing experience.

This thesis examines the overseas experiences of these six artists through a dual lens, that of cultural assimilation and cultural hybridity. It offers a new approach to exploring Australian artistic expatriatism and refutes the oft-repeated argument that expatriatism was extraneous to the prevailing nationalistic history because it happened ‘over there’ and not ‘here’. Expatriatism is reconstructed here as a vital part of that account, one that inflects and transforms the so-called quarantined narrative. By presenting the issue from a different perspective, one that is consistent with the progressive revisionism of cultural theorists such as Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson, I hope to add to existing knowledge in the field as a means of reflecting on Australia’s place in the world.

The Case Studies and Criteria for Selection

Paris and London are the primary cultural contexts for this study. Six case studies were chosen in respect of their expatriate affiliations with these cities: two each in connection with London and Paris, and two whose careers embraced both cities. Several key selection criteria were used to determine the artists. They must have

- been Australian born or were essentially Australian through close family connections and also having spent a significant amount of time in Australia.

Their expatriatism must have

- taken place in London or Paris, or substantively in both cities
- occurred during the period 1880 to 1930
- been long term (at least two decades or more) or permanent
- fostered effective assimilation into the primary host culture
- had a significant impact upon their artistic practice.

I also wanted the final make-up of case studies to reflect the gender structure of

Australian artistic expatriatism during the period under investigation, which consistent with my research was a 3:1 male to female quotient.⁵

The selected artists, together with their primary and ancillary cultural contexts are as follows:

Paris:

- Rupert Bunny (Born 1864, Melbourne; died 1947, Melbourne). Lived Paris 1886–1933; *also* London 1884–86 and Melbourne 1933–47
- John Russell⁶ (Born 1858, Sydney; died 1930, Sydney). Lived Paris 1884–88, 1908–12 and Belle-Île, Brittany 1888–1908; *also* London 1880–82, 1883–84 and 1915–18; Portofino and Spezia, Italy and Schönried, Switzerland 1912–15; Lyme Regis, Dorset 1918–19; Cagnes-sur-Mer, French Riviera 1919–21; Sydney 1882–83, 1921–22 and 1924–1930; and Brighams Creek, New Zealand 1922–24

London:

- George Coates (Born 1869, Melbourne; died 1930, London). Lived London 1900–30; *also* Paris 1897–1900
- Bertram Mackennal (Born 1863, Melbourne; died 1931, Torquay, England). Lived London 1882–84, 1888 and 1894–1921; *also* Coalport, Shropshire 1886–88; Bournemouth, Dorset 1921–26; Torquay, Devon 1927–31; Paris 1884–86, 1888 and 1891–93; Edinburgh, 1893; Melbourne 1888–91; and Sydney 1926–27

⁵ Historical accounts have supported the view that expatriatism was principally a male initiative. My research, however, reveals that many women artists also travelled abroad. The quotient is 66% male to 34% female artists.

⁶ Most writers use the name John Peter Russell, perhaps not to confuse the artist with his father, also named John Russell. In this thesis I have opted to use John Russell. This was the artist's preferred way of signing his work in 40.6% of cases. The next common signatures are 'JR' (21.6%) and 'Russell' (20.3%). The artist used the letter 'P' (but never Peter) in his signature in 14.4% of cases. 'J Russell' accounts for the remaining 3.1% of signature cases. These figures are based on my analysis of 320 documented inscriptions of works cited in Ann Galbally's catalogue *The Art of John Peter Russell* (1977), pp. 97–124. Both the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne use the name 'John Russell', in their collection cataloguing systems, further supporting my use of this designation.

London and Paris:

- Agnes Goodsir (Born 1864, Portland, Victoria; died 1939, Paris). Lived Paris 1900–06, 1920–39 and London 1906–20
- Ethel Carrick (Born 1872, Uxbridge, England; died 1952, Melbourne). Lived London c. 1896–1905, 1935–39 and Paris 1905–13, 1916–35, 1945–48; *also* Melbourne 1913–16, 1952; Kashmir 1939; Sydney 1939–45, 1948–50; and Tangier, Morocco and Nice 1950–52

In any selection process involving a radical narrowing of choice there will be inevitable exclusions. Why choose these six artists over others? Most turn-of-the-century Australian expatriates lived in Europe temporarily or in the short to medium term. Few persisted with long-term residencies or adopted permanent expatriatism. This benchmark eliminated many artists from the final selection. Of the case studies chosen, Rupert Bunny stayed the longest, in his primary cultural context of Paris for some forty-seven years. In contrast, John Russell stayed the shortest, living in Paris and at Port-Goulphar on Belle-Île for twenty-eight years. Jointly, the selected artists averaged around thirty-six years in their main locations, with the two women artists Ethel Carrick and Agnes Goodsir remaining generally six years longer than their four male colleagues, forty compared to thirty-four years. Few other Australian artists matched such longevity overseas.

Bunny and Russell were significant choices because of their exceptional embrace of French culture and its importance to their oeuvres. In the case of Russell, this extended to his remarkable friendships with four titans of late nineteenth and early-twentieth century western art, Henri Matisse, Claude Monet, Auguste Rodin and Vincent van Gogh; but his remarkable connection with the landscape of Belle-Île outweighed all other impulses, engendering works of immense vigour. In Paris, Bunny's practice consistently incorporated printmaking (monotyping) as well as painting, which distinguished him from nearly all other expatriates, who worked mostly in a single medium.⁷ Will Dyson, Margaret Preston and Thea Proctor were exceptions, all three succeeding as painter-printmakers, but they went to Europe

⁷ Most expatriates worked as painters, a few as sculptors and only one, Gladys Reynell, as a ceramicist.

significantly later than Bunny and stayed for periods that fell well short of the specified timeframe for the study.⁸ The art of influence was pivotal to Bunny's creativity and it is explored here as the dynamic focus of his expatriatism.

As a sculptor, Bertram Mackennal was an obvious choice because of the dissimilarity of his work practice compared with that of the other five cases, who were primarily painters. Mackennal was one of only three known Australian sculptors to go abroad in the late nineteenth century. Fellow sculptors C. Douglas Richardson and Harold Parker departed for London in 1881 and 1896, respectively; however, Richardson's expatriatism was short-lived, lasting only eight years from 1881–89, which excluded him from selection. Parker stayed much longer, thirty-four years, but his modest and retiring disposition seriously prevented him from successfully assimilating into British culture, an additional selection criterion.⁹ In contrast, Mackennal fully exploited his expatriatism through his versatility and adaptability to London's responsive artistic milieu. As Australian curator Deborah Edwards keenly maintains, 'By almost all of those criteria upon which artistic success was measured in Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bertram Mackennal proved the most successful artist internationally that the country had produced'.¹⁰

George Coates was selected because he has not been critically studied before¹¹ despite the fact that he established a notable reputation in London as a portrait painter. Research into Goodsir has also been lacking, and she remains relatively unknown beyond the small circle of Australian art historians and curators supporting her work.¹² As the wife of E. Phillips Fox, until recently Ethel Carrick's involvement

⁸ Will Dyson worked in London 1909–25, Margret Preston 1904–06 and 1912–19, and Thea Proctor 1903–12 and 1914–21.

⁹ Harold Parker had limited overseas success. The acquisition of *Ariadne* by the Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain) in 1908 and the major sculptural commission *Prosperity* and *The awakening of Australia* in 1915–18 for the entrance to Australia House in the Strand were his most important achievements in London. Case study George Coates had a similar temperament to Parker, but assimilated more easily into British culture.

¹⁰ Deborah Edwards, 'Adaptability and versatility: Bertram Mackennal – An overview', in Deborah Edwards, *Bertram Mackennal: The Fifth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales), 2007, p. 15.

¹¹ The artist's wife, Dora Meeson Coates, in 1937 wrote *George Coates: His Art and His Life* (London: J. M. Dent), but this publication is primarily a biography.

¹² In 1998 Karen Quinlan published *In a Picture Land over the Sea: Agnes Goodsir, 1864–1939* to accompany an exhibition of the same title at the Bendigo Art Gallery.

in Australian art was largely overshadowed by her husband's role.¹³ Although British born, Carrick was fundamentally Australian through her marriage to Fox and close connection with his family in Melbourne along with having spent a significant amount of time in Australia. All three painters established important careers overseas, thus a reconsideration of their expatriatism is timely.

Historical and Contemporary Theoretical Discourse

Unlike literary expatriatism, which has been researched in some depth, artistic expatriatism remains a neglected field of academic study in Australia. The first fully informed text on the issue appeared in 1934 with the publication of William Moore's pioneering historical work, *The Story of Australian Art* (reprinted as a facsimile in 1980).¹⁴ This was followed several decades later by Bernard Smith's key history *Australian Painting 1788–1960* (1962) and then shortly afterwards by Robert Hughes's paperback *The Art of Australia* (1966). Later publications broaching the subject of expatriatism include Daniel Thomas's *Outlines of Australian Art* (1973), Ann Galbally's *Studies in Australian Art* (1978), and the anthology, *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art* (2011), edited by Jaynie Anderson. Sasha Grishin's recent *Australian Art: A History* (2014) adds significantly to the discourse, especially relating to the Edwardian period in France and Great Britain. Contemporary art journals, notably *Artlink* (1998) and the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* (2008–09) have also added critical commentary in incisive articles.

While individual monographs on Australian expatriate artists have dealt with their overseas careers at length, their focus has not been on expatriatism per se. These studies include Dora Meeson's *George Coates: His Art and His Life* (1937); Ann Galbally's *The Art of John Peter Russell* (1977) and *Charles Conder: The Last Bohemian* (2002); Ross McMullin's *Will Dyson: Cartoonist, Etcher and Australia's Finest War Artist* (1984); P. A. E. Hutchings and Julie Lewis's *Kathleen O'Connor: Artist in Exile* (1987); Janda Gooding's *Chasing Shadows: The Art of Kathleen O'Connor* (1996); Patricia Fullerton's *Hugh Ramsay: His Life and Work* (1988); Karen Quinlan's *In a Picture Land Over the Sea: Agnes Goodsir, 1864–1939* (1998);

¹³ In 2011 the Queensland Art Gallery published *Art, Love & Life: Ethel Carrick & E. Phillips Fox*. Angela Goddard and others wrote it to accompany an exhibition of the same title.

¹⁴ The original publishers Angus & Robertson, Sydney issued the facsimile reprint.

Penelope Little's *A Studio in Montparnasse: Bessie Davidson, an Australian Artist in Paris* (2003); Deborah Edwards's *Bertram Mackennal: The Fifth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project* (2007) and *Rupert Bunny: Artist in Paris* (2009); and Angela Goddard's *Art, Love & Life: Ethel Carrick & E. Phillips Fox* (2011). The publications on Bunny, Russell, Coates, Mackennal, Goodsir and Carrick have greatly informed my writing on these artists, and are not discussed further here. Those on Conder, O'Connor, Dyson, Ramsay and Davidson are important texts, but are similarly excluded because of their greater biographical emphasis.

Many of the texts noted above have been written around the conflicting tendencies of 'home and away', of the push and pull between national and international impulses in Australian art. These have been accounts of the development of an art of an essentially nationally identifiable character, where expatriate artists who worked overseas and remained for a sustained period or did not return were marginalised. The writings of Moore, Smith, Hughes, Galbally and Thomas represent this so-called quarantined history. In our increasingly internationalised environment, where the cultural impact of global processes is intensely felt, contemporary cultural theorists (Rex Butler, Catherine Speck and others) have challenged these earlier constricted readings. Proclaiming expatriatism a vital constituent in their new, more inclusive narratives, these academics assert that a succession of Australian artists went abroad at the turn of the twentieth century and thereby clearly contested the newly emerging nationalistic conception of Australian art.

The visiting American art critic and journalist Sidney Dickinson was one of the earliest supporters of expatriatism, keenly defending it in his late nineteenth-century writings and lectures. In his important article 'What should Australian artists paint?' published in the short-lived monthly arts review, the *Australasian Critic* in October 1890, he maintains:

If our promising young artists will but acquire the accomplished methods of a school like the modern French, and bring to bear upon them their own individual and national feeling, we shall find art making great progress amongst us; and the more especially as foreign study has the important effect

of stimulating observation.¹⁵

Dickinson was a well-educated and highly regarded cultural commentator from libertarian New England in the United States. In Melbourne, where he resided from 1890–93, an increasingly nationalistic public reacted cautiously to his promotion of overseas study for local artists. This community attitude reflected an emerging patriotic sentiment in the 1890s, propelled by various causes such as the rise of socialism and the Labor Party, the first moves towards federation and the surfacing of artistic and literary developments including the Heidelberg School and the legendary achievements of writers such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson.

During a decade that saw a steady flow of Australian painters and sculptors go abroad,¹⁶ the right-wing Melbourne *Argus* newspaper, in an editorial on 24 August 1895, summarised the prevailing mood:

Our youthful artists ... must be left free to choose, and those who are stirred with the greatest ambitions will prefer to seek their fortunes in Europe ... We cannot help the process, yet is there any reason why we should assist it? ... Think what a deprivation it is to take away from our young school of painters every choicer soul ... and they never return ... Meantime, Australia suffers.¹⁷

Local public debate on the subject intensified as a growing number of artists travelled to Europe to study and to work, and reports of others, struggling with difficult English and French experiences, became known. Walter Withers, for example, stayed barely a year abroad (in London and Paris from 1887–88), largely because of an uninspiring artistic encounter. George Coates is known to have suffered recurrent bouts of ill health and financial hardship during the early years of his expatriatism in Paris.¹⁸ Humphrey Macqueen tells of Tom Roberts's 'fate-filled decision' to stay in Europe after 1907, where 'his productivity became so slender and his successes so rare that he might have suffered from ... nervous exhaustion, though

¹⁵ Sidney Dickinson, 'What should Australian artists paint?' in the *Australasian Critic* (Melbourne), vol. 1, no. 1, 1 October 1890, pp. 21–22.

¹⁶ Between 1890 and 1899 ten promising young Australian artists travelled abroad: Aby Altson, Charles Conder, David Davies and Violet Teague (1890); James Quinn (1894), Harold Parker (1896); George Coates and Arthur Streeton (1897); Ambrose Patterson (1898); Hans Heysen (1899).

¹⁷ *Argus* (Melbourne), 24 August 1895, p. 6.

¹⁸ Dora Meeson Coates, pp. 17–18.

not a complete nervous breakdown'.¹⁹ Geoffrey Serle, too, writes of Roberts's predicament and of Arthur Streeton's 'long black periods' while trying to establish themselves in England.²⁰

There was, of course, concern within more progressive sections of the artistic community about the development and effect of reactionary views like that expressed by the *Argus*. Prominent émigré artist-educators such as George Folingsby and Bernard Hall in Melbourne and Julian Ashton and Alfred Daplyn in Sydney, all of whom had trained and worked in Europe and brought first-hand experience of international art to their teaching, contested such scepticism concerning expatriatism through their enlightened instruction and support of innovative schemes like the government-sponsored National Gallery of Victoria Travelling Scholarship.²¹ Bohemian arts factions such as Melbourne's Cannibal Club and Buonarrotti Society, through their lively group debates, also challenged such cynicism by fostering expatriatism as a worthy career path for their progressive followers, many of whom had read about bohemian life in Paris.²²

Discussion about whether Australian artists should stay at home or go abroad ultimately became a transnational debate. For the prominent English art critic and historian D. S. MacColl, Australian artists had little choice but to leave their native country. In his critique for the influential *Saturday Review* of the landmark 'Exhibition of Australian art' at the Grafton Gallery, London in April 1898, he states:

The difference between manufacturing art in so newly manufactured a country and growing it in the richer deposits of the Old World is proved very neatly by the presence in this collection of two works by Mr Charles Conder,

¹⁹ Humphrey McQueen, 'The fortunes of Tom Roberts', in Ron Radford, *Tom Roberts* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 1996, p. 36.

²⁰ Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia 1788–1972* (Melbourne: Heinemann), 1973, p. 91.

²¹ The National Gallery of Victoria Travelling Scholarship was established in 1887 upon Folingsby's advice. It provided a much-needed focus for students wishing to study abroad. Folingsby's support of overseas study for talented students produced a remarkable legacy. Aby Altson, Rupert Bunny, David Davies, E. Phillips Fox, John Longstaff, Bertram Mackennal, Tudor St George Tucker and Walter Withers all headed to Europe immediately after completing their training under Folingsby.

²² The Buonarrotti Society, in particular, was a strident advocate of professionalism and an amplifier of bohemian attitudes. From 1887 several of its artist-members travelled abroad including Aby Altson, George Coates, John Longstaff, Tudor St George Tucker and Walter Withers.

who was in Australia for a few years in extreme youth, but who was lucky enough to escape. We know what he has done since; it would be hard to find the faintest trace of his remarkable gift in the two pictures here [*A landscape* and *Departure of the 'Orient'*]; and it is conceivable that it might never have developed at the Antipodes, certain that it would have been hampered, misled, blighted.²³

Of other works, mainly by self-styled painters of the Heidelberg School and Julian Ashton School, MacColl critically observes:

These dowdy, shallow ... pictures merely prove the poverty of the land. How much better to have provided ... the most promising students with travelling bursaries, so that they might ... study in countries where there are pictures.²⁴

MacColl's review was written at a time when Australian art was still in its infancy, when the major artists of the Heidelberg School and Ashton's influential academy were still establishing styles that would have an indelible impact on the development of Australian art. It provides a valuable insight into how the imperial capital perceived the current plight of 'antipodean' art, even if through a solitary vilifying gaze. But it is MacColl's flagrant rebuke of what he observed to be Australia's artistic 'poverty' that is most critical. Clearly, for him, expatriatism was not only desirable but also essential for the future success of Australian art. From a post-colonial perspective, with its refiguring of the teleological slant towards the mutuality of centre and periphery (explicated in the writings of cultural theorists such as Rex Butler, Charles Green, and Nikos Papastergiadis and others), MacColl's comments might be construed as irreverent and patronising.

By 1898, when MacColl wrote his review, no less than eighteen leading Australian painters and sculptors had tested or continued with resettlement abroad.²⁵ Whether he

²³ D. S. MacColl, 'Exhibition of Australian art', in the *Saturday Review* (London), 16 April 1898, quoted in Bernard Smith (ed.), *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: The Colonial Period 1770–1914* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), 1975, p. 219.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ These artists included John Russell (1880); C. Douglas Richardson and Tom Roberts (1881); Bertram Mackennal (1882); Rupert Bunny (1884); E. Phillips Fox, Tudor St George Tucker and Walter Withers (1887); John Longstaff (1888); Aby Altson, Charles Conder, David Davies and Violet Teague (1890); James Quinn (1894), Harold Parker (1896); George Coates and Arthur Streeton (1897); Ambrose Patterson (1898).

was cognisant of this is unclear. As a major advocate of internationalism (for example, of the French Impressionists) in spreading ideas and shaping public attitudes in Britain, one would have expected his support of Australian artists abroad to have been more encouraging given their early achievements in England and France. MacColl's assessment echoed that of Sidney Dickinson and a number of others in Australia during the 1890s, where painting was still regarded as 'a light and graceful recreation ... cultivated in a spirit of dilettantism'.²⁶

Nationalism's orthodoxy together with First World War patriotism ensured that the debate on expatriatism during the early twentieth century remained generally the preserve of conservative forces within Australian art. Influential artist-writer Lionel Lindsay and gallery director J. S. (Jimmy) MacDonald,²⁷ both of whom were notoriously orthodox campaigners in periodicals like *Art in Australia* and elsewhere, articulated an extreme patriotism in narrow and biased writings that encouraged an almost xenophobic intolerance of artists working overseas, and also of international exhibitions staged in Australia.²⁸ Both were empire men who loathed European modernism. Lindsay, for example, wrote lucidly and generously about the art he admired, but his taste did not extend beyond Post-Impressionism. He became in his later years a strong opponent of modernism, expressing his sense of outrage in *Addled Art*.²⁹ Despite their extreme dislike of modernist art developments in Europe during the early twentieth century Lindsay and MacDonald had a great fondness for Britain and also the Continent.³⁰ Indeed Harold Wright wrote of Lindsay, 'his heart is here [Australia] when it is not in Spain'.³¹ This apparent contradiction relates more to their failure to embrace the far-reaching transformations occurring in European art

²⁶ Bernard Smith, 'Dickinson, Sidney (1851–1919)' in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (Canberra: Australian National University), 1981, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dickinson-sidney-5977/text10199>, accessed online 22 February 2016.

²⁷ J. S. MacDonald served as Director of the (National) Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney from 1928–36 and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 1936–41.

²⁸ Lindsay's opposition became increasingly apparent after the First World War. For example, he zealously greeted the return of George Lambert to Australia in 1921 after his twenty-one years abroad (see Hughes, *The Art of Australia*, p. 100). J. S. MacDonald reported vehemently on the 1939 'Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art', rebuking it as 'putrid meat ... the product of degenerates and perverts ... filth'.

²⁹ Lionel Lindsay, *Addled Art*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson), 1942.

³⁰ MacDonald had lived in Paris and London 1898–1904 and Lindsay had made at least four trips to Europe between 1902 and 1934.

³¹ Harold Wright, 'Sir Lionel Lindsay', in *Sir Lionel Lindsay: Etchings and Drypoints* (Sydney: Ure Smith), 1949, p. 8.

at the time and their importance for Australian art rather than Europe as the cultural centre of the world.

Conversely, William Moore offered a symbol of hope. His two-volume *The Story of Australian Art* provides a timely 1930s account of expatriatism. The author had touched on the issue several decades earlier in *City Sketches*, from where his famous avowal that ‘there are two chapters in the life of a Victorian artist ... Genesis and Exodus’³² was widely appropriated.

Moore’s ‘Artists abroad’, the opening chapter of the second volume of *The Story of Australian Art*, provides a sweeping and detailed account of numerous eminent and minor artists who worked overseas from the nascent 1850s to the 1920s. His text relies heavily on anecdotal evidence obtained directly from the artists themselves or from close contemporaries.³³ It provides a lively interpretation of then-contemporary attitudes to expatriatism. However, Moore’s lack of rigorous scholarship and sustaining methodology, attributable to his journalistic background,³⁴ somewhat diminishes the intensity of his argument. As the academic Terry Smith acknowledges in the early 1980s, Moore did not share a concern with applying professional standards to writing the history of Australian art.³⁵ Nevertheless, Moore’s comprehensive account of the artists who travelled abroad, including to then far-flung Bali, India and South Africa is impressive. That he gives due recognition to Adelaide Ironside in particular, and also to Robert Dowling and Margaret Thomas for their unique roles in pioneering expatriatism in the 1850s and 1860s, is also notable – but this is achieved to the detriment of a number of key expatriates (Russell, Bunny, Mackennal and others) whose influence is barely cited. With the vantage point of today, Moore’s writing must be seen as an early, quasi-historical

³² William Moore, ‘The queen city’, in *City Sketches* (Melbourne: William Moore), 1905, p. 13.

³³ Moore garnered much of his information for the book while living in London 1912–19.

³⁴ In his early career Moore was art critic for the Melbourne *Herald*. Following his return from London in 1919, he wrote for many newspapers and periodicals including the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, the *Brisbane Courier* and *Home* magazine.

³⁵ See Terry Smith, ‘Writing the history of Australian art: Its past, present and possible future’, in *Australian Journal of Art* (Melbourne: Art Association of Australia), vol. 3, 1983, pp. 10–29. However, in Moore’s defence, it must be remembered that the discipline of art history was not established as an academic field internationally until the 1920s and 1930s, and in the case of Australia not until the mid-1940s. In 1946 the University of Melbourne appointed the young British art historian Joseph Burke as the *Herald* Chair of Fine Arts, establishing Australia’s first department of art history. In a sense Moore wrote his history in an academic void.

attempt to contextualise some seventy years of expatriate activity, an exceptional effort given the dearth of Australian artistic scholarship at that time.

Bernard Smith's *Place, Taste and Tradition*, published in 1945 (reprinted 1979), is remarkable for its early scholarly reading of Australian art. It does not cover expatriatism per se, except for partial commentary in disparate chapters citing artists like Bunny, Conder and George Lambert.³⁶ It was to be another seventeen years before Smith's seminal survey *Australian Painting 1788-1960* (1962, updated 1971, 1991 with Terry Smith and 2001 with Christopher Heathcote) appeared, presenting the first critical study of expatriatism. Here, the period germane to my investigation, 1885 to 1932, is sectionalised into three chapters in line with artists' travels, with the biblical themes of Genesis (birth), Exodus (exile) and Leviticus (return).

In 'Exodus', Smith proffers an important assessment of the travels of several key expatriates, commencing with John Russell's departure for London in 1881 [*sic*]³⁷ and concluding, in 1919, with the return of George Bell to Australia. Smith's incisive account is based on his prescient acceptance that 'the world of art, at its best, is always an international community'.³⁸ He argues that Australian artists generally squandered this opportunity. For him, the 'Edwardian excursion' achieved little of lasting value for either European or Australian art, excluding perhaps the individual accomplishments of Bunny, Conder and Roberts. Smith contends this failure lay in the motives that caused the expatriates to leave, specifically local indifference and a desire for recognition at London's Royal Academy and the Paris Salons. But for all of his uncertainty, Smith recognises that expatriatism did achieve success of a sort, especially after the First World War, by refreshing our artists and invigorating the local Australian tradition, even if within mainstream conservatism.

The vexed question surrounding the relationship between Australian and overseas artists through the obsessive influence of European and American models is one of

³⁶ See Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788* (Sydney: Ure Smith), 1945; reprinted 1979. Rupert Bunny and George Lambert are discussed in Chapter 6, titled 'The Aftermath of Impressionism', pp. 137–39 and 141–45; and Charles Conder in Chapter 7, titled 'Aestheticism and Nationalism in Australian Art and Criticism', pp. 156–58.

³⁷ The date cited by Bernard Smith's is incorrect. Russell sailed for London in 1880 and enrolled at the Slade School of Fine Art in early January 1881.

³⁸ Bernard Smith, 'Exodus 1881–1919', in *Australian Painting 1788–1960* (London: Oxford University Press), 1962, p. 165.

the predominant themes of Robert Hughes's *The Art of Australia* (1966, revised 1970). Its manuscript was largely completed by 1963, a year before the author's own expatriatism in Europe and subsequently in the United States. One senses a prophetic restlessness and edginess in this critical text. In the chapter entitled 'The Expatriates 1890–1930', Hughes responds to the issue in typically melodramatic style, using brusque metaphors to underpin or stress his strident opinions. Like Smith before him, Hughes sees expatriatism as a catalyst for cosmopolitan experience and, thus, an opportunity for Australian artists to embrace a greater openness and receptivity. In the same way, he maintains that many artists rashly wasted or abandoned the opportunity; there were exceptions, including Russell, Lambert, Ramsay, Max Meldrum, Bunny and Fox. Establishing affinities between the works of these expatriates and those of their corresponding European counterparts, for instance Bunny's empathy for Bonnard and Vuillard and, through their common interest in Japanese prints, with Gauguin and the Nabis, Hughes casts expatriatism as an apogean journey. He argues, however, that in constructing a world beyond the margins of Australian parochialism, the expatriates faced a tension between their desire for creative independence and their preoccupation with localising it within an Anglo-French paradigm.

Daniel Thomas's text 'Expatriates' in *Outlines of Australian Art* (1973, expanded 1980 and 1989) is a summary characterisation of works by Bunny, Mackennal and Russell in the uniquely shaped private collection of Melbourne art dealer Joseph Brown.³⁹ Echoing Smith and Hughes, Thomas reasserts the argument that these artists were, on the whole, not nationalistic but more concerned with finding their own place in the mainstream of world art. While all three achieved this, in the early years of the twentieth century only Mackennal and Bunny were widely acknowledged by the Australian public. Russell remained virtually unknown except to fellow painters until resurrected in the late 1970s by Ann Galbally.⁴⁰

³⁹ In 2004 Joseph Brown presented some 150 works of art from his collection to the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, where they are now on permanent display in the Ian Potter Centre, NGV Australia at Federation Square.

⁴⁰ Initially through Ann Galbally's *The Art of John Peter Russell* (Melbourne: Sun Books), 1977 and subsequently through the exhibition 'John Peter Russell: Australian Impressionist', which was shown in 1978 at the Rijksmuseum Vincent Van Gogh, Amsterdam; the National Gallery of

In 1978 Galbally wrote 'Australian artists abroad: 1880–1914' for *Studies in Australian Art*, a publication sponsored by the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne. The essay title is misleading as Galbally's text concentrates on artists who left Australia between 1881–99. Although claiming seventeen significant artists departed for Europe during this period (in my assessment there were at least nineteen), she names and discusses only thirteen.⁴¹ Galbally's exclusions include key artists such as David Davies, George Coates, Hans Heysen, Harold Parker and, notably, Violet Teague, the first important female artist to go abroad in the late nineteenth century. She singles out Russell and Mackennal as having successfully met the expatriate challenge, but as perpetrators rather than adherents of modern art. 'For the rest, life as an Australian-born artist meant constant to-ing and fro-ing between Australia and Europe ... constant frustration and disappointment'.⁴² Galbally fails to elaborate further. Rather, her attention is drawn to exploring the training options available to these artists, the Royal Academy and Slade schools in London and the Parisian ateliers of Cormon, Julian and Carolus-Duran. Beyond this focus, which in itself is valuable material, little else is considered. Her closing premise that 'these men ... still identified with the Salon art of the turn of the century ... [and] became the taste-makers of academic art in Australia throughout the twenties and thirties',⁴³ merely underpins the partisan claims of earlier writers.

For Anne Gray, a leading scholar working in the field, expatriatism played a crucial part in the maturation of early twentieth-century Australian art, contributing a more cosmopolitan cross-cultural approach. In her assiduously researched essays, 'The Edwardians' (*The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires*, 2004) and 'Australian artists within a wider world, 1900–1930' (*The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, 2011), Gray provides illuminating evidence of a surprisingly dynamic international art scene, with Australian artists duly taking their place alongside others from Britain, Ireland, the United States and elsewhere. She is one of only a small number

Victoria, Melbourne; and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁴¹ Galbally lists consecutively Bertram Mackennal, C. Douglas Richardson, Tom Roberts, John Russell, John Longstaff, Charles Conder, Tudor St. George Tucker, Aby Altson, E. Phillips Fox, Rupert Bunny, Walter Withers, Arthur Streeton and James Quinn.

⁴² Ann Galbally, 'Australian artists abroad: 1880–1914', p. 58.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 66.

of researchers to acknowledge the significant contribution of returning expatriates to the development of a broader attitude towards art in Australia, especially in paving the way for the acceptance of modernism. In challenging previous writings that the artists who left our shores did not ‘bring back much of lasting value to Australia’,⁴⁴ Gray staunchly defends expatriatism’s role in fostering a European turn-of-the-century aesthetic and ideology, which she argues broadened the local perspective and nurtured a more pluralistic approach.

Sasha Grishin’s recent input to the field, *Australian Art: A History*, incorporates two informative chapters devoted to artists who expatriated to France and Britain during the Edwardian period. His research into the underlying principles behind ‘artistic migration’ is enlightening. Grishin singles out the fading embryonic colonial art market and Australia’s innate cultural cringe as the two most prominent ‘push/pull factors’. He is the first Australian writer to touch on the issue of the ‘psychological circumstances’⁴⁵ of our expatriates, but doesn’t elaborate further.

In their article ‘Stay, go or come: A history of Australian art, 1920–40’ (*Australian & New Zealand Journal of Art*, 2008/9), Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson present post-First World War expatriatism as a vigorous mix of localism and globalism, ‘a period of constant movement and interaction; artists stayed, artists left and artists arrived’.⁴⁶ Their revisionist assessment debunks the dominant nationalistic history, where the inter-war years are often considered a time of retreat or withdrawal after the deleterious effects of protracted conflict. This history of ‘UnAustralian’ art deftly brings together the unresolved exclusions of that account. The narrative is one of a continuing and dynamic interaction between the national and international, in which neither could be properly understood without the other. Butler states ‘it is just this tension between the Australian and the UnAustralian that I am wanting to capture’.⁴⁷ By reconfiguring the expatriate experience as part of a broader unnationalistic history, Butler and Donaldson reclaim émigré (and also settler) artists as integral to

⁴⁴ Bernard Smith, p. 165.

⁴⁵ Sasha Grishin, *Australian Art: A History* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press), 2014, p. 150.

⁴⁶ Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson, ‘Stay, go or come: A history of Australian art, 1920–40’, in *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Art* (Brisbane: Art Association of Australia and New Zealand), vol. 9, nos 1/2, 2008–09, p. 142.

⁴⁷ Rex Butler, ‘On writing a history of UnAustralian art’, <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:237213>.

the story of Australian art, one that profoundly inflects the traditional one.

In the same journal issue as Butler and Donaldson, academics Catherine Speck and Georgina Downey invigorate the discussion on expatriatism by examining the complex relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism.⁴⁸ Through the examples of three painters – Rupert Bunny, Bessie Davidson and Dorrit Black – they explore how expatriatism facilitated an offshore variant of Australian modernism. Living and working in Paris and London these artists strongly connected with and articulated cosmopolitan culture. Speck and Downey argue that cosmopolitanism has yet to be fully incorporated as a central issue into the debate on what constitutes localism. In countering modernism as a mere local inflection, the authors provide us with three models of dynamic international engagement that greatly enriched early twentieth-century Australian art.

My aim in this thesis is to develop the more positive view of expatriatism as proposed by writers such as Butler and Donaldson, and also Downey and Speck, through my examination of the six case studies earlier detailed. Until quite recently, the discourse on Australian art has tended to regard the notion of cultural hybridity as a dichotomous formation arising from expatriates' failure to preserve their Australianness or attain country-specific assimilation. In her essay 'Conceptualising hybridity: Deconstructing boundaries through the hybrid', American sociologist Hajar Yazdiha points out that hybridity can offer the opportunity for a counter-narrative, 'a means by which the dominated can claim shared ownership of a culture ... employing hybridity as a powerful tool for liberation from the domination imposed by bounded definitions of ... nation'.⁴⁹ Additionally, she suggests that hybridity has the ability 'to empower [the] marginalised ... deconstruct bounded labels ... to individualise identities ... and reimagine an interconnected[ness]'.⁵⁰ Applying Yazdiha's hypothesis, it could be argued that cultural hybridity offered Australian artists a new reality constituted through a dichotomous synthesis of

⁴⁸ Catherine Speck and Georgina Downey, 'Cosmopolitanism and modernism: On writing a new Australian art history', in *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Art* (Brisbane: Art Association of Australia and New Zealand), vol. 9, nos 1/2, 2008–09, pp. 101–17.

⁴⁹ Hajar Yazdiha, 'Conceptualising hybridity: Deconstructing boundaries through the hybrid', in *Formations* (New York: City University of New York), vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, p. 32.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

foreign and imported elements, i.e., the cultural space in which they operated and their Australianness or aspects of it. Some might describe such an outcome as an expedient middle course; yet the willingness of our artists to transform their colonial beliefs in light of their changed situation and to develop acquired hybrid identities unquestionably facilitated their assimilation into and realignment within the mainstream culture. My intention in this thesis is to test this proposition for each of the selected artists to discover if cultural hybridity was a determining factor in realising their expatriate objectives.

As well as reassessing the value of expatriatism for Australian artists, my research also addresses another lacuna, namely the lack of consideration of female expatriate artists. Until the 1970s, male writers penned the discourse on Australian expatriatism. This had the deleterious effect of presenting the phenomenon as an exclusively masculine experience. Even Anne Galbally, one of the first female writers to research the issue, in her 1978 essay for *Studies in Australian Art* presents a partisan assessment with no women cited.⁵¹ In his earlier discourse on the subject, Robert Hughes's claim that he had 'omitted no painter whose work substantially impinged on Australian sensibility',⁵² reflects his belief that expatriatism was an entirely male endeavour. That these and other writers until recently have continued to portray the subject as the exclusive territory of men runs counter to my research upholding the view that women represented over a third of artists going abroad until the outbreak of war in 1914.⁵³

Cultural Imperatives and Challenges

Cultural assimilation has been the subject of continuing debate among leading international historians, cultural theorists and sociologists. The Canadian academic and sociologist Gérard Bouchard has been at the forefront of this discussion. In 2007, he co-chaired, along with the philosopher Charles Taylor, the Bouchard–Taylor Commission, a one-year Quebec commission examining the issue of 'reasonable

⁵¹ In her article Galbally cites thirteen expatriates, all of whom were men. In my estimation there were at least thirty-seven artists, including no fewer than thirteen women, working overseas during this period.

⁵² Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia* (Middlesex: Penguin), 1970, p. 24.

⁵³ My research shows that women represented 34% of Australian expatriate artists pre-1914.

accommodation' for minorities in the province.⁵⁴ Cultural integration was a major issue examined in the report, which propounds the concept of interculturalism as an alternative to multiculturalism in accommodation practices related to cultural difference. This paradigm is based on the principle of reciprocity between the mainstream culture and the minority or newcomer. It is essentially a search for conciliation, for balance between often-competing principles, values and expectations. Interculturalism calls for new ways of coexisting within and beyond differences at all levels of collective life. The practice has both supporters and opponents, with advocates endorsing interculturalism over multiculturalism because of its inherent inclusiveness. They argue that multiculturalism has divided society by legitimising segregated individual communities, which have isolated themselves and accentuated their specificity.⁵⁵

I draw inspiration from Bouchard's vision as a model for integration and the management of cultural diversity with reference to the path taken by the six case studies. This concept acknowledges that cultural adaptation often progresses through several stages, with the most frequent pattern comprising honeymoon, rejection, regression and adjustment.⁵⁶ As stated by Bouchard, the honeymoon phase is often accompanied by feelings of energy, optimism and confidence. Eventually the over-optimism wanes and is followed by periods of denial, anxiety and depression. The final stage of adjustment occurs after the acceptance of change and the development of feelings of belonging and the emergence of a shared culture. Clearly, the various aspects of this engagement vary in line with the different ways culture affects individuals, and this would have been the case with the Australian expatriates in their diverse approaches and responses to their new cultures.

Based on Bouchard's model and my studies of the selected cases it is clear that

⁵⁴ The Commission was created in 2007 by the government of Quebec in response to public discontent concerning 'reasonable accommodation' of religious and cultural practices. In the report published in 2008, four main issues are examined: cultural integration, collective identity, church-state relations and the most appropriate procedures for handling cultural and religious harmonisation requests. The vast majority of the memoranda and testimonies submitted to the Commission favoured interculturalism as the path for Quebec.

⁵⁵ John Nagle, *Multiculturalism's Double Bind: Creating Inclusivity, Cosmopolitanism and Difference* (Farnham: Ashgate), 2009, p. 169.

⁵⁶ Gérard Bouchard, 'What is interculturalism?' in *McGill Law Journal* (Montreal: McGill University), vol. 56, no. 2, 2010, p. 438.

regression was the most problematic stage for them. This was largely due to a further weakening of their expatriate circumstances, often following a taxing period of denial and anxiety. Destabilisation intensified the psychological tension between continuity and disconnection. It was usually associated with instability or some kind of crisis, fuelled by the artists' own feelings of uncertainty about their future. As Bouchard points out, this insecurity and the reciprocal mistrust it produces can help perpetuate the 'us/them' duality.⁵⁷ The central challenge for the expatriates was to bridge this divide rather than inflame it.

Thus the real test, initially at any rate, was not so much one of artistic ability but of mental strength in overcoming the psychological tensions that expatriatism imposed, particularly relating to socio-cultural factors, for example gender and sexuality in the case of the two women artists in this study. I hold the view that the majority of Australia's long-term expatriate artists, including the six case studies, enjoyed positive experiences abroad and indeed savoured some degree of international success, largely due to their ability to overcome internal cultural obstacles. Equally, I contend that many of our artists returned from disappointing experiences abroad because of their failure to come to terms culturally and mentally with their circumstances. Their inability to develop appropriate assimilative skills compounded this by intensifying the 'continuity/disconnection', the 'us/them' divide.

Commentators on Australian art have mostly overlooked the impact of cultural assimilation and the psychological and socio-cultural hurdles faced by our artists in their pursuit of expatriatism. The little that has been written has tended to debate the stay/go vector almost exclusively from the homeland perspective, rarely from the position of the host culture. Yet the latter viewpoint is also crucial to a greater understanding of how the expatriates dealt with integration in what was frequently perceived by them as a daunting experience. By choosing to stay and by embracing the wider cosmopolitan context, each of the case studies shared in a complex two-way process, simultaneously absorbing new knowledge from, and imparting individual experience to, the adopted culture. Thus, each joined their contemporaries from other parts of the world in transforming the art scenes of Paris and London into

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 445.

mutually supportive and welcoming milieus.⁵⁸

Cosmopolitanism in these cities impelled the selected artists to perceive themselves as dwelling in the world (rather than in a specific place) and, as Downey and Speck assert, to comprehend that world as a ‘fluid, interconnected, conflicted and dynamic whole’.⁵⁹ The cosmopolitanism they embraced could be criticised for being Western in focus rather than embracing ‘the world’ as such. Nevertheless, their capacity to transcend narrow nationalist parochialisms is what makes their work of interest today where the mobility of populations poses a challenge to rigid forms of nationalism. While the Kantian/Enlightenment idea of cosmopolitanism in the eighteenth century may have in practice only extended to the Western world and was practised on the assumption of the superiority of Western cultures over all others, all the world’s cultures have great relevance today. The idea of openness to other cultures is potentially radical and in the context of the expatriatism of the six selected artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appears more so.

For the Australians, however, in pursuing cultural openness a tension remained between nationalist and internationalist ways of seeing themselves, their art and also their homeland. For the first time they were confronted with the uncertainty of their own identity. The issue of their being distinctly Australian or a hybrid (British-Australian or French-Australian) was a concern, which they struggled with throughout their expatriatism. As cosmopolitanism overrode national boundaries and the art of the nineteenth century generally conformed to contemporary European trends and to French tendencies in particular, the more progressive expatriates embraced the notion of Australianness as a vigorous mix of cultures; thus the qualities and characteristics of the mainstream culture were intrinsically tied into their acquired identity, incorporating both plurality and a new cultural synthesis.

British academic Montserrat Guibernau, a leading researcher in the study of the

⁵⁸ Paris and London also attracted many artists from within their national borders. They, too, had to contend with assimilation – from a provincial to an urban situation – and helped transform the art scenes of both cities. Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse, for example, grew up in Provence and Picardy respectively and went to Paris in their early twenties. Both not only transformed the Parisian artistic milieu, but also helped to define the revolutionary developments in painting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁵⁹ Catherine Speck and Georgina Downey, p. 114.

construction and expression of acquired identity,⁶⁰ maintains that identity is a ‘phenomenon of a fluid and dynamic nature [where a] belief in a shared culture, history, traditions ... kinship ... and destiny have been invoked’.⁶¹ Guibernau identifies five dimensions of acquired identity: psychological, cultural, historical, territorial and political.⁶² At an individual level, the most significant are the psychological and cultural elements. She contends that the first arises from the consciousness of forming an emotional attachment, a ‘felt’ closeness to others (and to place). This fosters a sense of belonging, engendering loyalty and social interconnection with fellow residents. Guibernau argues that through this emotional identification with others ‘individuals transcend their finite ... their efforts ... become worthwhile ... and the conviction of having contributed to a higher aim, that of preserving and enhancing [society], increases self-esteem’.⁶³ She also asserts that moral and ethical issues shape the cultural dimension of acquired identity. The recognition and gradual acceptance of the values, beliefs, customs and practices of one’s adopted home imply a strong cultural investment by which the newcomer is able to foster bonds of solidarity. Furthermore, the new arrival imagines and experiences their new culture as separate and distinct from others, including that from which they left or emigrated.

Reference has already been made to Hajar Yazdiha’s proposition that cultural hybridity has the ability ‘to empower the marginalised, individualise identities and re-imagine an interconnectedness’.⁶⁴ The theory of leading post-colonial philosopher Homi Bhabha can be related to Yazdiha’s notion. In his key text *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha uses concepts such as mimicry, interstice, hybridity and liminality to argue that cultural production is most productive where it is particularly ambivalent. He emphasises what he describes as culture’s ‘in-between’; for instance, the interstitial spaces within and among individuals and cultures which do not maintain a single position but form identities in an ongoing process. Bhabha further

⁶⁰ Montserrat Guibernau is a political sociologist and Professor of Politics in the School of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary University of London, England.

⁶¹ Montserrat Guibernau, ‘Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: A critical assessment’, in *Nations and Nationalism* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell), vol. 10, issue 1–2, 2004, p. 134.

⁶² Ibid, p. 135.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 136.

⁶⁴ Hajar Yazdiha, p.36.

argues that ‘These “in-between” spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood ... that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation’.⁶⁵ He contends, ‘It is in the emergence of interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest or cultural value are negotiated’.⁶⁶

Bhabha’s contention can be extended to support my argument that hybridity was an inevitable outcome in identity formation for the case studies. In his or her adopted city, each artist experienced an interstitial phase, the *ça et là* (here and there) binary division that became the liminal space between their Australianness and acquired identity. In negotiating this terrain, each needed to think and act beyond what Bhabha terms ‘narratives of originary and initial subjectivities’⁶⁷ and focus on those processes or states that were produced in the articulation of cultural differences. In this way, strategies of empowerment and transition were formulated that opened up the possibility and eventual realisation of cultural hybridity for each of the artists.

Locationist Influences

My research reveals that in their quest for international experience and success in the late nineteenth century Australian artists were driven by three main imperatives:

- to augment their colonial art training by obtaining specialised European instruction at a leading government-sanctioned institution or private atelier
- to measure themselves against the most widely accepted standards of the day in the competitive artistic milieus of Paris and London, then the two major international yardsticks
- once established, to launch and pursue significant (and salaried) professional careers.

In their endeavour to meet these objectives countless artists of various nationalities were drawn to Paris and London at the end of the nineteenth century. Australians were no different from their foreign counterparts in their preparedness to expatriate.

⁶⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge), 1994, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The majority strove to achieve the first two goals simultaneously, usually studying at a prominent Parisian atelier or London academy-style school while also exhibiting their work at the Salons, the Royal Academy and the expanding network of alternative exhibition spaces operated by the various art societies and private dealers in these cities. Few, however, were adept in achieving the third, which inevitably involved assimilation into the host culture.

For the untested Australian artists, relocation from the colonial capitals of Sydney and Melbourne – the latter itself an extraordinary cosmopolitan centre and the second largest Western city in the British Empire after London in the late nineteenth century – to the global metropolises of Paris and London was an enormous mission. Most would never have travelled beyond domestic borders before, let alone to the other side of the world. In the late nineteenth century it was an arduous journey, usually taking around six weeks by passenger steamer, the primary mode of intercontinental travel. Once having landed on foreign shores, for the earnest expatriates there was then the inevitable problem of how best to deal with adapting to the complexities of living in a new and unfamiliar culture.

Increasing numbers of international art students flocked to Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Australian artists followed this trend, usually favouring Paris to study and London to establish their careers. In the following section, I examine why Australian painters and sculptors pursued this particular path and what each city offered them by way of artistic opportunity.

By the 1880s, when Australian artists began travelling to Europe in significant numbers, London was the largest and most important city in the world. Paris, with slightly less than half the population of its international rival, was the world's second-largest city.⁶⁸ Immense empires sustained both metropolises. The British Empire was the greatest of all imperial realms, due mainly to its maritime hegemony. It covered a quarter of the earth's land area and comprised over one fifth of its population. France had become the world's second largest colonial power, although

⁶⁸ The censuses for 1881 reveal that the population of greater London was estimated to be 4.71 million, compared with Paris's 2.23 million inhabitants. Source: *Demographia*, Belleville, USA.

far behind Britain in terms of population and size.⁶⁹ Paris may have been more beautiful and better designed, especially after Baron Haussmann's modernisation program during the Second Empire (from 1852–70 under the regime of Napoleon III), but it was less imposing, financially and economically, than London.

At the turn of the twentieth century migration rather than natural increase dominated in peopling both capitals. Settlers no longer came mainly from within their national borders, but from their colonial empires and the world beyond, largely enabled by improved transport. Both cities were extraordinarily cosmopolitan. They acted like magnets on the peoples of their empires, and the steady stream of visitors and migrants contributed to their cosmopolitan character. Adversity and poverty may have afflicted the masses, but the wealthy elite in both cities embraced a modern urban lifestyle shaped by rapid industrialisation and economic growth.

London and Paris were founts of cultural and intellectual creativity and endeavour. Each had an enduring artistic tradition extending over many centuries in which the visual arts maintained an integral and influential presence. Artists helped configure each centre that bore their own modest imprimatur through a complex interaction of reciprocal forces and processes. Australian artists were an important part of this interface, their strong individuality, indomitable spirit and egalitarianism adding to its vibrancy.

For the majority of Australian artists heading to Europe, Paris was seen as an essential first step, not the end journey. Their final destination was London, the nexus between their colonial past and future opportunity. Despite its eminence as *la ville lumière* and the modernist global capital (prominently symbolised in the spectacular modernity of the recently completed Eiffel Tower), Paris did not enjoy the close 'home' relationship that connected Australians to London. Their anglicised values and ethics found more ready acceptance in the English capital, which fostered a more intimate and acquiescent connection. In this sense, Paris became an important testing ground for Australians, a place where a strong grounding in the principles and

⁶⁹ These estimations are based on the size of each empire at its pinnacle. At the peak of its power (1922), the British Empire covered more than 33.7 million square kilometres and contained 458 million people. At its height (1914), the French Empire covered 12.3 million square kilometres and had a population of 110 million.

techniques of art and an awareness of cosmopolitan principles could be gained before moving on to the establishment practices of London. The fact that four of the six artists in my case studies – Rupert Bunny, John Russell, Agnes Goodsir and Ethel Carrick – were drawn to Paris or more broadly France and thus contested this trend makes their expatriatism all the more compelling in the context of this investigation.



Image 1 Paris during the Exposition Universelle, 1900

Paris's reputation as the creative hub of Europe was well known within existing artistic circles in Australia. Art journals gave extensive coverage to the city's lively art scene, and the correspondence of early expatriates like John Russell and Bertram Mackennal provided detailed accounts of

their Parisian ventures. Both artists, for example, are known to have exchanged letters with Tom Roberts following his return to Melbourne in 1885.⁷⁰ Their news, generally concerning exhibitions seen and travels made as well as technical painting issues, through Roberts and others would have been casually conveyed to local artists.⁷¹

Along with traditional academic painting and sculpture, Paris supported a diverse range of art forms at the *fin de siècle*: printmaking, photography, poster making, decorative arts, interior design and the newly developed medium of film, following the Lumière brothers' first projected motion pictures in 1895. This multiplicity of artistic activity, together with the celebrated bohemian lifestyle of districts such as Montmartre and Montparnasse, then heartlands of intellectual and artistic life, attracted countless artists. However, it was Paris's renowned private atelier system of

⁷⁰ Several of these letters are in the Tom Roberts Correspondence and Papers, 1884–1931, call nos. A2478–2481, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁷¹ See, for instance, letters from John Russell to Tom Roberts, quoted in Ann Galbally, *The Art of John Peter Russell* (Melbourne: Sun Books), 1977, pp. 90–95.

art training, together with the anticipation of acceptance at the celebrated annual Salons that lured artists from all over the world. ‘Besides the Frenchmen, there were Russians, Turks, Egyptians, Serbs, Roumanians [*sic*], Finns, Swedes, Germans, Englishmen and Scotchmen, and many Americans’, the English painter William Rothenstein observed of the crowded ateliers in 1889.⁷²

The académies of Colarossi, Cormon, Delécluse and Julian formed the four major private ateliers in *fin-de-siècle* Paris. To be studying at one of these studios under leading artists of the day such as William Bouguereau or Jean-Paul Laurens⁷³ was a significant achievement for most expatriates. Both Colarossi and Julian were especially popular with French and foreign students, including Australians. Among the case studies, Bunny, Coates and Goodsir studied at Julian’s, with Goodsir also attending the classes of Colarossi and Delécluse. Russell joined the smaller and more exclusive Cormon’s atelier. Unlike the École, where women were not admitted until 1897,⁷⁴ these ateliers accepted both male and female artists into their programs, which broadened their appeal and demand. In contrast, Carrick and Mackennal trained in London.

Unlike the highly disciplined teachings of the government-sanctioned École des Beaux-Arts and the Royal Academy Schools and Slade School of Fine Art in London, all eminent educational institutions at the turn of the twentieth century, Paris’s private atelier system of instruction offered students a freer and more independent approach to art. For Australian artists, accustomed to a rigorous British-style art education system, the open-teaching practices of the ateliers were a liberating experience. In *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, American art historian Albert Boime provides a detailed account of the daily routine and curriculum of the ateliers.⁷⁵ In summary, the organisation of instruction consisted of four major components: elementary drawing lessons,

⁷² William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories* (London: Chatto & Windus), 1978, pp. 40–41. Edited and abridged from the three volumes of William Rothenstein’s memoirs (1931) by Mary Lago, 1978.

⁷³ William Bouguereau and Jean-Paul Laurens were highly respected teachers at the Académie Julian.

⁷⁴ Kathleen Adler, “‘We’ll always have Paris’: Paris as training ground and proving ground”, in Kathleen Adler, Erica E. Hirshler and H. Barbara Weinberg, *Americans in Paris, 1860–1900* (London: National Gallery), 2006, p. 27.

⁷⁵ Albert Boime, ‘The curriculum of the private ateliers: Practice’, pp. 22–47 and ‘The social organisation of the atelier’, pp. 48–52, in *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Phaidon Press), 1971.

drawing and painting from the live model, compositional study in the form of sketches, and copying. Drawing instruction (with charcoal) was the primary consideration, and intensive life drawing sessions consumed much of the daily schedule. Painting was taught only after the student demonstrated a thorough grasp of the academic drawing style. Emphasis was placed on the mastery of technique (on *métier*), employing a sequence of studio exercises in the preparation and finishing of a painting; the finished work therefore assumed much less importance in the curriculum than the preparations. Copying in the Louvre, in pencil or in the form of oil sketches, took place most afternoons and constituted an essential part of atelier training. The practice of studying the work of old masters *in situ* substantiated the importance of Parisian instruction for Australian artists, since there were limited opportunities in Melbourne and Sydney to see masterworks of the quality displayed in the Louvre.

While this system of training could be seen as a variant of the conventional art school approach to studio practice, it differed noticeably in its informality and relaxed attitude. The English painter Julius Price describes the atelier as ‘a casual, go-as-you-please sort of place’.⁷⁶ William Rothenstein noted, ‘Following on the orderliness of the Slade and the aloofness of the students, the swarming life at the académie ... seemed vivid, exhilarating and pregnant with possibilities’.⁷⁷ The atelier curriculum in general allowed a certain freedom to manoeuvre, and this freedom was apparent in the more immediate and direct style of works produced, which conservative forces such as the École saw as ‘no more than the consequence of an incomplete education’.⁷⁸ The atelier’s unconventional, open-style approach paralleled the formative changes taking place in society, in which a more relaxed laissez-faire attitude found its complement in the increasing fluency and individuality with which painting and sculpture were expressed.

Atelier training was but one goal for Australian artists living in Paris; the other was to have their work exhibited at the renowned Société des Artistes Français (Old

⁷⁶ Julius Price, *My Bohemian Days in Paris* (Philadelphia: David McKay), 1913, p. 58.

⁷⁷ William Rothenstein, p. 40

⁷⁸ Albert Boime, p. 52.

Salon), until 1890 the greatest annual art event in the western world.⁷⁹ As Jacques Lethève asserts, ‘To be accepted for the Salon marked a turning point in an artist’s life ... Rejection could lead to dramatic consequences’.⁸⁰ From 1890, the secessionist Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (New Salon),⁸¹ vied with the Salon as an alternative and from 1903 both were joined by the contemporary and multidisciplinary Salon d’Automne.⁸²

It is difficult now to imagine the importance of these massive exhibitions in artistic life. By 1896 there were some 5000 artists exhibiting in the Old and New Salons.⁸³ Both were major social events with high potential as marketplaces. They provided recurrent opportunity for sales to wealthy art lovers and potential patrons, and accorded a level of respectability to the artists whose works were exhibited. To be awarded one of the various prizes or medals presented by the conferring juries or to achieve critical notice in the newspapers or a well-known journal was an essential career step for artists seeking international recognition. All case studies exhibited with one or more of the Salons at various times. Russell, however, was drawn to Paris’s avant-garde circles and opted for the trendier Société des Artistes Indépendants, with neither jury nor awards. Carrick and Goodsir also exhibited

⁷⁹ An annual art event since 1864, the Salon was a colossal undertaking involving immense administrative and financial resources. It attracted vast numbers of works and a huge public. In 1882, for example, there were 343,874 visitors (Milner, p. 48). London’s *Art Journal* in 1886 estimated that paintings alone occupied a total of eight miles of space (Milner, p. 49). The *vernissage* (varnishing) of opening night was a grand social occasion. With the establishment of the competing Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1890, the Salon’s authority began to wane.

⁸⁰ Jacques Lethève, *Daily Life of French Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Hilary E. Paddon (London: George Allen & Unwin), 1972, p.108.

⁸¹ The Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (New Salon) was founded in 1890 in a schism from the Société des Artistes Français that decisively ended the hegemony of the official Salon. The painter Ernest Meissonier (1815–91) led the secession, which addressed issues involving the production and marketing of art and its role in contemporary politics. Despite its innovative stance, the New Salon was neither an avant-garde nor a marginal group. Among its founder members were successful artists who had been at best tolerated at the established Salon. They included the painters Carolus-Duran, Puvis de Chavannes, Henri Gervix and the sculptor Auguste Rodin. Whereas the Salon restricted membership to French artists, although admitting foreign works for exhibition, the New Salon accepted foreign members and featured international exhibitions, including both established figures and newcomers.

⁸² The Salon d’Automne was established in 1903 as a progressive alternative to the official Salon. Choosing autumn for its annual exhibition was strategic. It not only allowed artists to exhibit works painted *en plein air* during the summer, but it differentiated it from the other two large Salons, whose exhibitions took place in spring. The platform of the Salon d’Automne was based on open admission, accepting French and foreign artists working in all disciplines of the visual arts.

⁸³ John Milner, ‘Salon stars and hopefuls’, in *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1988, p. 56.

there.⁸⁴ In addition to the Salon des Indépendants and Salon d'Automne, a number of private galleries in Paris championed modern art, with those run by Paul Durand-Ruel, Adolphe Goupil and Louis Martinet setting the trends. This is especially true of the Impressionists⁸⁵ and of pioneering artists like Cézanne who were unable to penetrate the arduous jury selection process of the major Salons.⁸⁶

Of the selected artists, Bunny and Russell worked long-term in Paris or, in the case of Russell, mainly on Belle-Île. After brief early periods in Paris, Coates and Mackennal settled in London, with the latter spending the last decade of his life in southern coastal England. During their time abroad, Carrick and Goodsir moved between London and Paris, and in Carrick's case also later between Paris and Sydney; but both ultimately felt more at home in Paris insofar as its more progressive milieu was more able to accommodate women artists. That most Australian artists, however, saw London as the vital centre to advance their international careers must be seen in light of the city's pre-eminence as the imperial metropolis and a key global art market, and its having a similar culture to that of their homeland, thus engendering a greater feeling of 'interconnectedness', to quote Hajar Yazdiha.

As the nineteenth century ended, Australia still maintained an obsequious relationship with England. Its connection was intrinsically tied to the power relations and politics between the metropole and its colonies. Australia was then under the law-making power of the British parliament, and British culture formed the basis of its identity. Even with the shift in the 1890s towards an identifiable national character and subsequent nationhood, most Australians still sought to uphold a guardian relationship with Britain. Federation in 1901, rather than enabling the expression of nationalistic ideals, actually became an expression of British imperialist designs. As Australian writer and academic Donald Horne points out, 'Even when the colonies federated it was believed that Australia was still not a true

⁸⁴ Russell exhibited with the Salon des Indépendants 1906–09, Goodsir in 1912 and Carrick in 1921. See Dominique Lobstein, *Dictionnaire des Indépendants, 1884–1914*, vol. II (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2003.

⁸⁵ Durand-Ruel, for example, recognised the artistic and fashionable potential of Impressionism as early as 1870 and his first major exhibition of their work took place at his London gallery in 1872. Eventually Durand-Ruel had exhibitions of Impressionism at his Paris gallery. He also took Impressionist work to New York and did much to establish the popularity of Impressionist art in the United States.

⁸⁶ Jacques Lethève, p.109.

nation. Economically, strategically and culturally, Australia was defined as part of the British Empire'.⁸⁷ New South Wales Premier Sir Henry Parkes referred to it as 'the crimson thread of kinship that runs through us all';⁸⁸ only with time did Australians abandon this attitude. Prevailing expatriatism reflected this sentiment, which a common language and culture helped underpin, but for the pragmatic Australian artists kinship was merely the means to a greater good. Artistic recognition and success in London remained their primary motivations, with the exception of the more adventurous like Bunny, Russell and Goodsir, where French liberalism and nonconformity proved more engaging for their lifestyle and art.

London's identity as the central hub in global networks of finance, trade and communication made it a critical focus in the international art market. Its market was one of the most robust in the world, fuelled by the rising commercialisation of art through the development of an interrelated system of private art dealers and exhibition societies, and by the emergence of middle-class patronage. As Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich's *London Gallery Project* reveals,⁸⁹ professional dealers and regularised exhibition spaces became the city's dominant force in the field of cultural production during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries.

Their rapid rise paralleled the growing mercantile-class demand for art and the popularity of exhibition societies as part of an increasingly diverse retail market. The prevalence of these societies may have been one reason for the development of such a robust commercial gallery system in London. Dealers often showed the works of art societies, recognising that their cachet helped legitimise their own practices and remove the possible taint of commercialism.

According to British economic historian Youssef Cassis, by 1911 over 300 commercial art galleries operated in London.⁹⁰ By comparison *belle-époque* Paris,

⁸⁷ Donald Horne et al., *The Coming Republic* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan), 1992, p. 17.

⁸⁸ Geoffrey Brahm Levey (ed.), *Political Theory & Australian Multiculturalism* (Oxford: Berghahn Books), 2008, p. 226.

⁸⁹ Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, with David N. Israel and Seth Erickson, 'Local/global: Mapping nineteenth-century London's art market', in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* (South Orange: Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art), vol.11, no. 3, 2012, pp. 21–35, e-journal, accessed 1 November 2013.

⁹⁰ Youssef Cassis, 'Introduction: Comparative perspectives on London and Paris as international financial centres in the twentieth century', in Youssef Cassis and Éric Bussière (eds), *London and*

according to Malcolm Gee's research, hosted about 130 spaces.⁹¹ Reflecting this trend, in 1909 London's *Art News* reported, 'The artist knows full well that exhibiting is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. The more his work is seen, the wider the recognition accorded to him, the greater his opportunities of effecting sales'.⁹² For many Australians working in the English capital at the time, the commercial art market played a key role in facilitating critical commentary and commodity consumption of their work as well as the construction of artistic identity. Study of the exhibition histories of a number of London-based Australian artists, including the six case studies during the Edwardian era, reveals that many increasingly exploited the city's flourishing art market through the private dealer–exhibition society nexus. Commercial galleries favoured by the Australians included some of the most ambitious: Dowdeswell and Dowdeswell, the Fine Art Society, Goupil Gallery and Leicester Galleries. The Grafton Galleries, Grosvenor Gallery and New Gallery were other spaces with a predilection for Australian art.⁹³ London's extensive network of art-exhibiting societies also proved invaluable in promoting the work and careers of Australian artists. The most frequently supported included the Allied Artists Association (modelled partly on the non-jury Salon des Indépendants in Paris), Contemporary Art Society, International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, New English Art Club (where long-term Australian expatriates were adopted as British artists), Royal Institute of Oil Painters, and the Royal Society of Portrait Painters.⁹⁴

The emergence of an affluent middle class increasingly wielded influence on London's art market. Its elite, along with the English aristocracy, strongly supported the portraiture market, by commissioning artists to paint empowering likenesses to endorse their political ambition, social standing and prestige. In fact, portrait

Paris as International Financial Centres in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2005, p. 2.

⁹¹ Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930* (New York: Garland Publishing), 1981, p. 37.

⁹² 'Editorial: The cost of exhibiting', in *Art News* (London), 16 December 1909, p. 48.

commissions remained the most prevalent aspect of the British patronage system at the turn of the twentieth century. Australian expatriates exploited the practice to varying degrees. For example, once Coates's London career was established he profited substantially, and Mackennal significantly, through the production of civic and commemorative sculpture.

Like the Salons in Paris, the Royal Academy wielded tremendous influence on London's art scene until its authority was challenged from around 1910 by the avant-gardist position of English Post-Impressionism.⁹⁵ The Academy's annual summer exhibitions were a high point in the capital's artistic and social calendar. Five of the six case studies showed there; Russell was the exception. Like its French counterparts, the Royal Academy was considered the primary path to professional artistic success, attracting audiences, sales and publicity. To be elected to full



Image 2 Piccadilly Circus, London, 1900

membership of the Academy was undoubtedly the most coveted British award for any artist. Mackennal in 1922 was the first Australian artist to receive this distinction.⁹⁶ By then the Academy had become ultra-conservative, its summer exhibition selections

clichéd and derivative. As British museum director and art historian Dennis Farr notes, it emphasised the 'reworkings of earlier pictorial formulas, particularly those of the eighteenth century'.⁹⁷ This did not make Mackennal's success a pyrrhic victory, but rather an achievement in a transformed situation; nor did it discourage Australian artists from exhibiting there. Most hankered for the time-honoured

⁹⁵ The challenge emanated from the coalition of painters associated with the Fitzroy Street Group, the Camden Town Group (and later the London Group), and the now legendary Bloomsbury Group.

⁹⁶ Deborah Edwards, *Bertram Mackennal: The Fifth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales), 2007, p. 202.

⁹⁷ Dennis Farr, *English Art 1870–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1978, p. 297.

conventions that the Academy perpetuated: academic tradition, elitism and status. Above all, it represented respect and status, which Australian expatriates deemed crucial for their advancement into the upper echelons of London society.

Unlike Paris, where the language difficulty obliged many foreign artists to fraternise within their own home-based groups,⁹⁸ (though Australians generally crossed national boundaries because of their egalitarian principles), London's 'embrace of Empire' attitude generated a greater commitment to hospitality that was sympathetic to and supportive of artists from its overseas territories. The city's reputation for friendliness and generosity towards Australians especially came at a time when Australia held pride of place, strategically and economically, within the British Empire. Support structures such as the weekly publication *British Australasian*, launched in London in 1884, and the Chelsea Arts Club,⁹⁹ which became a home away from home for many Australian artists, highlighted the importance of the close relations between the two countries. In a letter to Tom Roberts in 1902 Arthur Streeton observed of the Australian coterie at the Chelsea Arts Club, 'They all seem to be here – Mackennal, Longstaff, Mahony, Fullwood, Spence, Norman, Minns, Fox, Plantaganet Tudor St George Tucker, Quinn, Coates, Bunny, Altson, K. Sonny Pole, other minor lights and your old friend and admirer Smike'.¹⁰⁰ For a time it appeared that the whole Australian artistic community had been transplanted to London, excluding Bunny, Goodsir and their ilk who favoured Paris because it challenged the celebrated though hackneyed 'mother-country' position.

The various locationist influences of Paris and London played a major role in establishing where Australian expatriate artists elected to study and work. Some opted for Paris, while others chose London. A small number like Carrick and Goodsir adopted both cities as home before eventually settling in Paris. Cultural

⁹⁸ For example, the American expatriate community established partisan societies such as the men's American Art Association and the American Women's Art Association to support their artists in Paris.

⁹⁹ The Chelsea Arts Club was founded in 1891 by James McNeill Whistler as a rival to the Royal Academy-affiliated Arts Club in Mayfair. It was originally located in rooms at 181 King's Road, Chelsea. In 1902 the Club moved to neighbouring premises at 143 Old Church Street, from where it continues to operate.

¹⁰⁰ Letter dated 27 December 1902, Arthur Streeton to Tom Roberts, cited in Ann Galbally and Anne Gray (eds), *Letters from Smike: The Letters of Arthur Streeton 1890–1943* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), 1989, p. 94.

context greatly affected how the case studies assimilated, and this in turn influenced artistic practice.

Summary

The significance of Australian artistic expatriatism as a research subject and the contextual framework for my investigation have been established. The basis on which the six case study artists were selected, together with their primary and ancillary cultural contexts, have been detailed. Three key issues concerning expatriatism – historical and contemporary theoretical discourse, cultural imperatives and challenges, and locationist influences of Paris and London – have also been considered. These concerns constitute the predominant focus and direction of the thesis, which the subsequent six chapters elucidate through an intensive study of how cultural hybridity impacted on the artistic practices of the individual case studies.

Part Two: Paris

Chapter 2: Rupert Bunny – Assimilating Influence into an Individual Vision

Introduction

Rupert Bunny's French expatriatism, spanning almost five decades from 1886 to 1933, was the longest of the six case studies and one of the most enduring of any Australian artist. Bunny passionately embraced French culture, assimilating into the cosmopolitanism and bohemianism of *belle-époque* Paris. His expatriatism was entirely 'one of connection, absorption and extension',¹ to restate Rex Butler's claim for Australian artists working abroad in the early twentieth century. Bunny's art incorporates several influences and this chapter explores those that had the greatest impact.

Initially I discuss the allure of *fin-de-siècle* Paris for foreign artists. Many, like Bunny, engaged with the city as if they were citizens of the world or, more precisely, the Western world, constructing a cosmopolitan space and identity within which to establish a successful career. Historian and cultural critic Humphrey McQueen described Bunny as 'the complete cosmopolitan',² and the artist's outlook of cultural openness and inclusiveness helped define his French experience. In the next section I examine Bunny's assimilation into the Parisian artistic milieu, to which he responded favourably through patterns of reciprocal interaction.

I then look at how expatriatism shaped Bunny's vision, giving rise to a generously rich oeuvre inspired both by Symbolism and Fauvism. Three important groups of work resulted: the allegoric 'Brittany idylls' inspired by various literary sources; 'Feminine Arcady' depicting the refinement of bourgeois Parisian life; and *Danse chromatique*, prompted by the vibrant theatricality of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

¹ Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson, 'Stay, go or come: A history of Australian art, 1920–40', in the *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Art* (Brisbane: Art Association of Australia and New Zealand), vol. 9, nos 1/2, 2008–09, p. 132.

² Humphrey McQueen, 'Gods and nymphs for neighbours', in *Time Australia* (Melbourne), 8 September 1986, p. 55.

To conclude, Bunny's achievements in France are evaluated. By the outbreak of the First World War his artistic reputation in Paris was well established, ensuring ongoing public endorsement and appreciation of his work. Following the death of his wife Jeanne in 1933, Bunny returned permanently to Australia where, after his own death, he fell into relative obscurity. Although he is now celebrated as one of this country's finest artists, his place within French art with regard to his Parisian success merits rehabilitation.

The Allure of *Fin-de-Siècle* Paris

In moving to Paris, the 'capital of the nineteenth century',³ Bunny joined a wave of young foreign art students who had made the city their home. It was then the second largest city in the world,⁴ remarkably cosmopolitan, and the focus of a new modernity shaped by rapid industrialisation and economic growth. Attracted to its urbane and modish lifestyle, people flocked to Paris from all parts of the world. The hosting of two major World's Fairs in 1889 and 1900 reflected the city's



Image 3 Rupert Bunny, c. 1884

irrepressible optimism and pre-eminence as a global metropolis. Bunny moved there in the Third Republic,⁵ an era of significant artistic achievement perhaps unparalleled in any other period of French history. Like its Second Empire predecessor, the republican government sought to use the arts to shape national identity and life. The establishment of a dedicated Ministry for the Arts in 1881 under Prime Minister Léon Gambetta was jointly inspired by a passionate belief in the edifying and educative role of arts in society and the perceived economic benefits of

³ Walter Benjamin, 'Paris: Capital of the nineteenth century' (1939) in Rolf Tiedemann (ed.) *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (New York: Belknap Press), 2002.

⁴ Paris had a population of around 2.3 million people and in size was second only to London, then the world's largest city. Source: *Demographia*, Belleville, United States.

⁵ The French Third Republic was created in 1870 following the collapse of the Second Empire of Napoleon III in the Franco-Prussian War. It survived until the German invasion and collapse of France in 1940.

such a move.⁶

Contemporary French architectural historian Stephane Kirkland contends that the earlier political and administrative program of the Second Empire under Napoléon III was explicitly based on the visionary agenda of cosmopolitanism,⁷ which the Third Republic adopted. He maintains that the Second Empire wanted to make Paris a ‘capital for humanity’. In the words of Baron Haussmann, the architect of the massive program of new boulevards, parks and public works, ‘This immense city has the pretension to be the head of modern civilisation; the principal seat of the sciences and the arts; the masterpiece of architects and engineers; the model of sound administration; and the veritable Rome of the present century.’⁸ With the fervent support of the republican government, during *la belle époque* Paris became the international hub of Europe for artists, writers and musicians. The period witnessed a plethora of artistic endeavour led by innovators such as Claude Monet, Auguste Rodin and Henri Matisse in the visual arts; Émile Zola and Guy de Maupassant in literature; and Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel and Fauré, whose music rivalled the traditional dominance of Germany. Along with painting and sculpture, artists worked vigorously in a variety of art forms including printmaking, poster design, the decorative arts and photography, the latter proving enormously popular as a result of the growing demand for portraiture, especially from an emerging bourgeoisie.

In the late nineteenth century Paris boasted a rich and dynamic culture, which in its magnitude and complexity embraced every aspect of knowledge and new technology while simultaneously respecting pleasure and freedom. The *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere of gaiety and prosperity was reflected in the endless life and excitement of Haussmann’s grand gas-lit boulevards, with their elegant theatres, restaurants, department stores and spacious gardens, all of which became crucial themes for the most progressive painters of the period. The Impressionists, especially, made these

⁶ See Susan Foley, ‘A great and noble painting: Léon Gambetta and the visual arts in the French Third Republic’, in *French History and Civilisation* (Melbourne: The George Rudé Society), vol. 4, 2011, pp. 6–17.

⁷ Stephane Kirkland, ‘Cosmopolitanism in the culture and planning of Second Empire Paris’, unpublished paper presented at the *Urban History Association Sixth Biennial Conference*, Columbia University, New York, 25–28 October 2012. An excerpt of the paper is available on the author’s website at stephanekirkland.com, accessed 24 July 2013.

⁸ Quoted from the excerpt on Kirkland’s website, accessed 24 July 2013.

settings universal through their sustained focus on Paris as the quintessential city, capturing its energy and atmosphere in their revolutionary new vision of urban life.

Well educated, urbane and fluent in French and German, the legacy of an exceptional upper middle-class upbringing in Melbourne, Bunny was clearly drawn to the cosmopolitanism of Paris and to its international reputation as the cultural capital of Europe. Disenchanted with the eighteen months he spent at Philip Calderon's St John's Woods Schools (from 1884–86), a preparatory school for London's Royal Academy, Bunny aspired to study in Paris, the destination for most progressive art students of the time. Looking back during a return trip to Australia in 1911, he observed:

Paris is the one place in the world to study for the man who wants to do really good work. Nowhere else does he get the atmosphere, the sympathy, which is indispensable to the serious student of painting ... It is [there that one] is in touch with a thousand theories and theorists, with all kinds of movements, some profound, some merely eccentric, that make up the history of modern art.⁹

Bunny's Assimilation into the Parisian Artistic Milieu

Outgoing and self-assured, Bunny promptly embraced his adopted city. The arrival of several Australian colleagues shortly afterwards provided vital home encouragement. In 1887, Emmanuel Phillips Fox (Ethel Carrick's future husband) and Tudor St George Tucker, both former contemporaries of Bunny at the Melbourne National Gallery School, arrived to study at private ateliers. That same year Walter Withers settled in Paris, and in 1888 John Longstaff, another Melbourne associate, arrived. Thus, by the late 1880s, a small coterie of Australian painters had gathered in Paris, some of whom like Bunny had befriended other foreign artists, including the British painter Alastair Cary-Elwes (with whom he shared a studio),¹⁰ the French poet Louise Ackermann and the Hungarian writer Zsigmond Justh.¹¹ By

⁹ Rupert Bunny, 'Art in Paris: Mr Bunny and the post-impressionists: The future of art in Australia', in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 September 1911, p. 9.

¹⁰ Extracts from the journal of Hungarian writer Zsigmond Justh suggest that Bunny was probably in a homosexual relationship with Cary-Elwes.

¹¹ Deborah Edwards, *Rupert Bunny: Artist in Paris* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales), 2009,

the 1890s Bunny's bohemian milieu had widened to include a number of American painters, among them Augustus Koopman and Lionel Walden (whom George Coates also later befriended) as well as French artists, the Impressionist painter Henri Martin and well-known portraitist Jacques-Emile Blanche, who would later become Bunny's partner in a teaching atelier.¹²

In Paris, from 1886 to around 1890, Bunny studied as a private pupil under the acclaimed French history painter Jean-Paul Laurens,¹³ a doyen of the Third Republic's grandiose civic mural program.¹⁴ With almost thirty years' painting experience, this esteemed artist exercised considerable influence over French art. Laurens's high-level involvement with two of Paris's principal art institutions – the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts as a prominent instructor, and the Société des Artistes Français as a Salon juror and subsequent president – provided a model of establishment success for the aspiring Bunny. Students were attracted to Laurens's depth of knowledge and immense technical ability although his aesthetic creed closely aligned his teaching with the academic tradition of European studio practice, a convention increasingly contested by the French avant-garde.

Laurens's teaching focused on the human figure assimilated through a rigorous course of drawing and painting. His approach was based on the program of instruction given at the French Academy, which emphasised the graduated practice of *étude* (academic drawing); *pochade* (a rapidly executed tonal sketch in oils); and *esquisse* (compositional layout), which Bunny would adhere to throughout his career. From Laurens, Bunny acquired his great skill as a painter, especially in the arrangement of elaborately posed figure compositions. He would have been inspired by Laurens's impressive triptych of the death and funeral of St Genevieve, recently commissioned for the apse of the Panthéon, and widely acclaimed following its completion in 1885.

p. 189.

¹² Ibid, p. 14.

¹³ Bunny gained an introduction to Laurens through the British painters Henry Tuke and Thomas Gotch.

¹⁴ Laurens was commissioned to paint numerous public works in Paris by prominent figures in the Third Republic's administration, including murals for the rebuilt Hôtel de Ville (City Hall), the apse of the Panthéon, and the ceiling and dome of the Théâtre de l'Odéon.

Laurens encouragement of Bunny extended beyond the classroom. A juror at the annual exhibitions of the Société des Artistes Français, the most important venue and marketplace for art in Europe in the late nineteenth century, Laurens undoubtedly facilitated Bunny's access. In 1887 he exhibited a small wash drawing, *Une nuit de Valpurgis* (*One night in Valpurgis*); a painting *Un sabbat* (*A sabbath*) was shown in 1888, and *Sainte Cécile*, a work commissioned by the Melbourne businessman and philanthropist Alfred Felton, was accepted for the 1889 Salon. Bunny would continue to show regularly with the Société until 1900.¹⁵

From 1901 to 1932 he exhibited with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts¹⁶ and in 1903 he showed in the inaugural Salon d'Automne. Perceived as a reaction against the conservative policies of the Old Salon, the Salon d'Automne immediately became a showplace of developments and innovations in early twentieth-century art, and Bunny continued to show there until 1931.¹⁷ His vigorous involvement in these three major Salons,¹⁸ the yearly highpoints of the Parisian artistic calendar, substantiated his place in the *juste milieu*. Like Bertram Mackennal in London, the focus of Chapter 5, Bunny was an aspirant 'insider' who sought official acclaim to consolidate his position within the host culture.

Exhibiting in the Salons brought with it enormous respect and prestige. They attracted thousands of visitors and to be included in them, and – even better – to be awarded a prize could make an artist's reputation, with any such success widely reported in the press leading to sales and further career opportunities. For Bunny, the Salons were an important step towards establishing himself in the competitive French art market. From the mid 1890s, three of Paris's most influential critics – Raymond Bouyer, Gustave Geffroy, and Gustave Kahn – wrote favourably of Bunny's work. Indeed, Geffroy championed it for three decades in *Le Journal*, then the most literary and *boulevardier* of the Paris daily newspapers. Through their

¹⁵ Pierre Sanchez, *Les Catalogues des Salons de la Société des Artistes Français, 1887–1901*, vols XV–XIX (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2008–12.

¹⁶ Gaïte Dugnat, *Les Catalogues des Salons de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1901–25*, vols III–VI (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2002.

¹⁷ Pierre Sanchez, *Dictionnaire du Salon d'Automne, 1903–1945*, vol. I (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2006.

¹⁸ Bunny also showed at the Salon de Lyon in 1905, 1914 and 1920. See Dominique Dumas, *Salons et Expositions à Lyon: Catalogue des Exposants et Liste de Leurs Oeuvres*, vol. I (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2010.

critical reviews these writers brought Bunny to the attention of the socially well-connected *moyenne bourgeoisie*, the potential major buyers of his work.

Prominent political figures and businessmen as well as leading socialites and artists, Rodin, Debussy, Maupassant and Oscar Wilde among them, attended Laurens's weekly private salons,¹⁹ giving Bunny unprecedented access to some of the most important political and cultural figures of the period. He also joined the artistic salons of Madame Ayem, a renowned collector of Gustave Moreau's work, and Emmi de Némethy, reputedly one of the best-known figures in Parisian society. De Némethy became a lifelong friend and initiated Bunny's friendship with the actress Sarah Bernhardt, who by 1890 had acquired some of his work.²⁰

Bunny also frequented popular bourgeois meeting places such as the Café du Dôme, renowned as an intellectual gathering place in Montparnasse, and the Café de la Paix, near the Opéra Garnier, which attracted many famous patrons such as Sergei Diaghilev and Émile Zola. The controversial French writer Colette and pioneering dancer Isadora Duncan (whose classical poses are a source of modern artifice in the *Danse chromatique* series) were also part of Bunny's wide social circle.²¹ Possibly no other Australian artist enjoyed such distinguished cosmopolitan company as that savoured by Bunny in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century.

It was in Paris, too, that Bunny met the illustrious Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba during her debut in 1889 at the Opéra Garnier.²² She became a great admirer of his work and they formed a lasting friendship. Of the many portraits painted of her, it was Bunny's *Madame Melba* 1902 that was her favourite.²³ In his history of 'UnAustralian art' Rex Butler notes, 'When Bunny painted Melba he was, in a sense, painting a self-portrait. Here we have two exemplary "UnAustralians", both of whom had spent considerable time abroad, had attained artistic authority, had tasted something of international success and were entirely at ease with their identities ...

¹⁹ Deborah Edwards, p. 18.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 189.

²¹ Mary Eagle, *The Art of Rupert Bunny in the Australian National Gallery* (Canberra: Australian National Gallery), 1991, p. 8.

²² Hilda Mackinnon, 'Before the nineties: Once more to Europe', in *Table Talk*, 10 May 1934, p. 8.

²³ The painting was installed in His Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne for many years before being purchased for the National Gallery of Victoria in 1980.

as Australians living abroad'.²⁴

In 1895 Bunny met Jeanne Morel, a twenty-four-year-old French artist and model.²⁵ They eventually married in 1902, and for the next three decades remained committed partners.²⁶ Their marriage heralded a new phase in Bunny's life and also in his art. Morel became the principal model for many of his paintings, including the celebrated 'Feminine Arcady', where she is shown in intimate interior images of leisured elegance, beautifully attired in elaborate dresses or in dual images of Edwardian *luxe*, lounging in bathing stations on the Seine, sometimes partly disrobed and sometimes almost fully naked.²⁷ As a French national, Morel became an important catalyst for Bunny's embrace of his adopted culture.

In 1909 Bunny joined the respected French society portraitist Jacques-Emile Blanche in opening the Atelier Blanche adjoining the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris's Latin Quarter. Specialising in the teaching of figure and portrait painting, the Atelier provided Bunny with the opportunity to impart his knowledge and skills of painting to both local and foreign students. Blanche enjoyed a wide circle of artistic and literary friends (Charles Conder, Marcel Proust and Oscar Wilde among them), and together with the atelier students they broadened Bunny's interactions with the Parisian cultural milieu.

Assimilating Influence: French Symbolism and the 'Brittany idylls' and 'Feminine Arcady' Series

Bunny's arrival in Paris in 1886 paralleled the publication of poet Jean Moréas's Symbolist manifesto in *Le Figaro*.²⁸ Reacting against the rationalism and

²⁴ Rex Butler and A.D.S. Donaldson, 'French, floral and female: A history of UnAustralian art 1900–1930 (Part 1)', in the *Online Journal of Art* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne), issue 5, 2010, p.8, at www.melbourneartjournal.unimelb.edu.au/E-MAJ.

²⁵ Jeanne Morel received her initial art training at the Orphanage of Arts in Montparnasse, an institution patronised by visiting teachers Laurent Desrieux and Lucie Destigny, both of whom were associated with the Société des Artistes Français (Old Salon). Morel exhibited intermittently at both the Old Salon and New Salon between 1884 and 1906, before reputedly pursuing a career as a singer.

²⁶ Jeanne Bunny died in 1933 at Les Landes in the Loire Valley, where the couple had purchased a cottage shortly after the First World War.

²⁷ Jeanne was also the subject of several formal portraits by Bunny, including *Jeanne Morel* c. 1895, *Portrait de la femme de l'artiste* (*Portrait of the artist's wife*) c. 1902 and *Dans une maison d'été* (*Portrait de la femme de l'artiste*) (*In a summer house* (*Portrait of the artist's wife*)) c. 1917.

²⁸ 'Le Manifeste du Symbolisme' was published in the literary supplement of *Le Figaro* on 18

materialism that had come to dominate western European culture, Moréas proclaimed the validity of pure subjectivity and the expression of emotion and idea over a realistic representation of the natural world. The movement took its impetus from Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*)²⁹ and found its major voice in the French poets Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine. Behind Symbolism lay an anti-rationalist spirit, reflecting a preoccupation with the realm of reveries and dreams that was shortly to exercise Sigmund Freud and the philosophical beliefs of Henri Bergson.³⁰ Although it began as a literary concept, Symbolism was soon identified with the works of a younger generation of painters and sculptors similarly rejecting the conventions of naturalism. Even Impressionism's concern with capturing transient effects of light was seen as a style wedded to surface appearances, with little interest in the inner world of the imagination or in subjective experience.

The Symbolist artists took their inspiration from the spiritual and mythological works of two significant precursors, Gustave Moreau and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes.³¹ Born in the 1820s, by the end of the century these painters had attained pre-eminence among the Symbolists, who closely identified with their message and style. Moreau made his mark at the Paris Salon of 1866 with his now famous *Orpheus* 1865.³² The Orpheus myth proved to be a favourite Symbolist theme and is given one of its first and most original interpretations in Moreau's translation showing a Thracian woman carrying the decapitated head of the Greek hero. A synthesis of graceful form and subtle colour, of allegory and of the artist's inner subjectivity, *Orpheus* and similar paintings by Moreau greatly appealed to the imagination of the Symbolist artists, many of whom came under his direct influence after he began teaching at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1891.

September 1886. See Léon Vanier's *Les Premières Armes du Symbolisme* (Paris: L. Vanier), 1889, digitised by Google from the University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor, accessed 2 May 2014.

²⁹ Published in 1857, *Les Fleurs du Mal* was influential in the Symbolist movement. The subject matter of these poems deals with themes relating to decadence and eroticism. Arranged in six thematic sections, the second part *Tableaux Parisiens* (*Parisian Scenes*) is considered one of the most formidable criticisms of nineteenth-century French modernity.

³⁰ French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson's (1859–1941) hypothesis that immediate experience and intuition are more important than rationalism and science influenced many thinkers in the first half of the twentieth century.

³¹ However, the then younger artists Odilon Redon, Paul Gauguin and Émile Bernard would later become the dominant Symbolist painters.

³² Collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Puvis de Chavannes considered himself primarily a history painter, practising what was still regarded as the supreme genre, the great secular and religious episodes of history. In his vast mural programs for institutional buildings in various French cities in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, and in many independent works, Puvis synthesised aspects of neoclassical formalism with a decorative aesthetic. These qualities, along with his emphasis on linear rhythm (over colour) and the flattening and simplification of forms, partly accounted for his enormous popularity among the succeeding generation of Symbolist painters who sought to emulate aspects of his style.³³ His utopian conception, adapting allegory to modern concepts, served as a point of departure for many younger artists. As French late nineteenth-century scholar Russell T. Clement noted, in his efforts to develop allegorical figures with particular meaning to the time, Puvis ‘achieved a stunning new vision’.³⁴

The French critic and devotee to Symbolism, Albert Aurier, claimed in 1892 that art should be ideational, symbolic, subjective and decorative.³⁵ Bunny’s receptivity to these ideas activated his commitment to an art of an imaginary dream world, of poetic evocation and musing, in the belief that ‘the aim of the artist should be the transmission of emotion’,³⁶ a synthesis of form and feeling, of personal expressivity and inner subjectivity. From the early 1890s his response was expressed in a series of large paintings of mythological figures – sea nymphs, fauns and goddesses – shown frolicking beside tranquil coastlines. Their principal stimulus was Brittany, then a remote and romanticised region of myth and legend, a destination since the 1860s for painters inspired by its exoticism and the mystery of its silvery light. Bunny first travelled to the province in the summer of 1887 and painted there annually until the end of the century, producing rapidly executed *pochades* which he enlarged in the studio.

The ‘Brittany idylls’ series evokes a world of reverie transformed through a fusion of

³³ Puvis’s popularity was boosted by his regular showing at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, of which he was co-founder and president, and the publication in 1895 of Marius Vachon’s important early monograph *Puvis de Chavannes* (Paris: Clément, Braun & Co.).

³⁴ Russell T. Clement, *Four French Symbolists: A Sourcebook on Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon and Maurice Denis* (Westport: Greenwood), 1996, p. 34.

³⁵ Gabriel-Albert Aurier, ‘Les Symbolistes’, in *Revue encyclopédique*, no. 32, 1 April 1892, pp. 475–87.

³⁶ Rupert Bunny, quoted in ‘The art of Rupert Bunny’, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 1911, p. 7.

decorative form and muted colour and light, the stylistic legacy of Symbolism and the first important work assimilating French influence into the young expatriate's hitherto Australian-constructed consciousness. Three major paintings, *Tritons* and *Mer idylle* (*Sea idyll*), both painted c. 1890, and *Pastorale* c. 1893, highlight the means by which Bunny absorbed the new style. Writing on the 'Brittany idylls' in



Image 4 Rupert Bunny *Tritons* c. 1890
Oil on canvas, 80.5 x 150.5 cm

the August 1895 issue of the *London Magazine of Art*, R. Jope Slade drew attention to Bunny's 'powerful and original imagination and a bizarre fancy'.³⁷ The poetic and emotive nuances of the series is perhaps best summarised in a statement by

Edward Burne-Jones, who was then hugely popular in France and had considerable influence on the Symbolists: 'I mean by a picture a beautiful romantic dream, of something that never was, never will be – in a light better than any that ever shone – in a land no one can define or remember, only desire – and the forms divinely beautiful'.³⁸



Image 5 Pierre Puvis de Chavannes *Le pauvre pêcheur* (*The poor fisherman*) 1881
Oil on canvas, 155 x 192.5 cm

The large poeticised allegory *Tritons* portrays the legendary sea creatures enjoying a moment of idleness in their tranquil ocean surrounds. The Christ-like figure to the right of the composition is similar to the bearded man in Puvis's *Le pauvre pêcheur* (*The poor fisherman*) 1881, an iconic proto-Symbolist work that attracted considerable attention

³⁷ R. Jope-Slade, 'An Australian quartette', *Magazine of Art*, vol. 18, no. 10 (London), 1895, p. 392.

³⁸ Ian Chilvers (ed.), 'Burne-Jones, Sir Edward', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2009, Oxford Reference Online, accessed 10 May 2014.

when it was exhibited in 1887.³⁹ Bunny almost certainly would have seen the exhibition and been drawn to the simplified, non-naturalistic style and tender emotionalism of the works. Puvis's influence is felt in *Tritons* in the timeless coastal setting, subdued colours of silvery pale blue and pink-tones, and the linear rhythm linking the pictorial elements together. The translucent flesh tones of the merpeople and the luminous sea foreshadow Bunny's emergent interest in the expressive potential of colour, a dominant concern of his later *Danse chromatique*

Tritons gained for Bunny the first *mention honorable* awarded to an Australian artist by the Paris Salon, where it was exhibited in 1892. This outcome was a significant milestone for him since it secured his first critical press reviews and signalled publicly his increasing role in the Parisian artistic milieu. Bunny received consistent positive comment for the 'Brittany idylls' cycle overall, which established his long-term association with several eminent French critics, including Raymond Bouyer, Gustave Geffroy and Roger Marx.⁴⁰ Their encouraging reviews brought his work to the attention of the museum world, leading to important connections like Georges Lafenestre, a curator at the Louvre, who became a key supporter of Bunny's work.⁴¹ With the exception of Bertram Mackennal, who successfully promoted himself within the upper echelons of English society, no other Australian artist achieved such an influential professional alignment. For both artists these orientations with the cultural centre were vital, enhancing their cultural assimilation and hence also their careers.

Painted around the same time as *Tritons*, *Mer idylle* similarly emphasises folklore and spiritualism provoking in the viewer an emotional response to the imaginary world portrayed. It depicts a youthful male sea figure blowing into a conch shell to calm or raise the waves, invoking music (in which Bunny had a parallel interest)

³⁹ 'Exposition de Tableaux, Pastels, Dessins par M. Puvis de Chavannes', Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris, 20 November – 20 December 1887.

⁴⁰ Bouyer wrote for *La Revue d'Art* and Geffroy and Marx were newspaper commentators for *La Justice* and *Le Figaro* respectively.

⁴¹ In 1886 Lafenestre was appointed adjunct curator at the Louvre and in 1888 he rose to the rank of curator, a position he held until 1907. During his time at the Louvre Lafenestre wrote journal reviews, including articles extolling Bunny's work.



Image 6 Rupert Bunny *Mer idylle (Sea idyll)* c. 1890
Oil on canvas, 100.5 x 161.5 cm

as a binding force between living creatures and nature. The modernity of Bunny's naked youth informs us that his Arcadia is an illusory rather than a temporal state, a state of being rather than a wistful yearning for the absent past. Bunny's reading of the Brittany coastline overlaps that of John Russell, then

residing on the outlying island of Belle-Île. Russell's interpretation, however, was a visceral response to the jagged coast, which became not simply a 'place of being' but also an inspiring 'situatedness of being'. In contrast, Bunny's paintings assimilate contemporary Symbolist attitudes to Brittany as a place of primitive innocence, his romanticisation of the region modelling itself on Puvis's calm, poetic images of a utopian dream world.



Image 7 Rupert Bunny *Pastorale* c. 1893
Oil on canvas, 142 x 251 cm

The narrative features of *Pastorale* include fauns, nymphs and idealised youths entranced by the music of a pagan pipe. A verdant coastline scattered with poppies (symbolising idleness and tranquillity) encircles them, and the pervasive silvery-pink

Breton light heightens the sense

of fantasy. The handsome youth playing the pipe invokes Bunny's allegory of the transformative powers of music as a catalyst to a heightened state of mystical consciousness. Bunny's positioning of *Pastorale*, and also of *Tritons* and *Mer idylle*, at the littoral zone of land and sea upholds French philosopher Henri Bergson's belief that water formed the bridge between 'the spiritual and the material' worlds.⁴²

⁴² See 'Soul and body', in Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1912) (Mineola: Dover), 2004, pp. 291–98.

This prompts suggestions of additional symbolic dualities in Bunny's work: the conscious and unconscious, real and imaginary, dreaming and awakening, and perhaps of localness and foreignness, intimated in Bunny's juxtapositioning of the familiar with the exotic in sensing his own liminal state as an expatriate. *Pastorale* introduces a recurrent technical ploy – red accents (in the vermilion poppies) into a low-key palette as both focal and unifying points in the composition – a pictorial strategy Bunny followed from Moreau's consistent application of crimson highlights.

In the May 1893 issue of the monthly journal *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, Georges Lafenestre wrote of *Pastorale*:

The young couple dreaming in the ancient *Pastorale* ... and [seen] sitting on a branch overhanging the edge of the water, may not be a true likeness as regards the forms, but the whole composition is imbued with ... poetry [and there is] a sense of tranquility so penetrating that one can overlook the uncertainty of execution.⁴³

The technical uncertainty to which Lafenestre refers was most likely Bunny's less well formed draughtsmanship, including his anatomical inaccuracy which remained a concern in his early work.

The 'Brittany idylls' reflected Bunny's desire to keep abreast of the latest developments in contemporary French art and to adapt his style accordingly. These Symbolist-inspired paintings were not only 'in style' but proliferated at the Paris Salon during the early 1890s, and consistent with this trend Bunny exhibited several of them.⁴⁴ Salon endorsement was of critical importance to his serious entrée into the Parisian art world, where a growing cultured middle class offered enormous commercial opportunity for his work. In their thematic and stylistic emphases, the 'Brittany idylls' provided a firm foundation for Bunny's continuing exploration of the female form as the vital focus of two further cycles, the 'Feminine Arcady' and *Danse chromatique*.

⁴³ George Lafenestre, 'Les Salons de 1893: La peinture au Salon des Champs-Élysées', in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, vol. CXVII, 1 May (Paris: Bureau de la Revue des Deux Mondes), 1893.

⁴⁴ Several paintings from the 'Brittany idylls' series were exhibited at the Old Salon in 1890, 1892 and 1893. See Pierre Sanchez, *Les Catalogues des Salons de la Society des Artistes François, 1890–95*, vols XV1 & XVII (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2008.

From the late 1890s Bunny began to reshape his interest in Symbolism. A new subjective vision, combining his earlier concern with classicism and the aesthetic world with a turn-of-the-century focus on femininity and the modernity of bourgeois Parisian life, now engaged him. The pictorial pursuit of a feminine Arcady would occupy the artist for almost a decade and transform his art into an idyllic portrayal of domestic intimacy, in which modern women, frequently semi-clothed and involved in musings and reveries beside expanses of water, began to fill his lavish canvases. Created for the most part between 1903 and 1910, this body of work in later years would come to be recognised by many as Bunny's most significant achievement, revealing his mastery of the interactions between illusionism and the decorative, the real and the poetic, and colour and light.

The work of Puvis provided an inspirational touchstone for the creation of Bunny's 'Feminine Arcady', with paintings such as *Jeunes filles au bord de la mer* (*Young girls at the seaside*) 1879 and *Vision antique* (*Ancient vision*) 1885⁴⁵ having particular significance. Both depict groups of semi-clothed, languorous women absorbed in reverie beside tranquil seashores in poetic settings at once timeless and modern. The imagery evokes sensuality and dream in what Puvis authority Jennifer Shaw terms 'sensory vision ... a kind of form based in visual pleasure'.⁴⁶ In linking reverie and desire for the female body to artistic creation, Bunny's Arcadian paintings could be seen as contemporary elaborations of Puvis's motifs as the 'traditional symbol of the sensuous world or sensate nature',⁴⁷ informed, however, by modern bourgeois femininity.

Four major works characterise the series: *Endormies* (*Sleeping*) and *Après le bain* (*After the bath*), both painted c. 1904; *Baigneurs* (*Bathers*) 1906; and *En été* (*Summer time*) c. 1907.⁴⁸ The arresting figure of Jeanne Bunny, in her mid-thirties, provided their inspiration. Her role as the chief model and artistic focus signified

⁴⁵ *Jeunes filles au bord de la mer* is in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. The mural *Vision antique* adorns the major staircase of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyons.

⁴⁶ Jennifer Laurie Shaw, *Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism and the Fantasy of France* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2002, p. 75.

⁴⁷ Deborah Edwards, p. 64.

⁴⁸ The works are in the following collections: *Endormies*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; *Après le bain*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; *Bathers*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; and *En été*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

Bunny's intense admiration for the French beauty, and gratified recognition of the rich and productive life they shared. Bunny's representation of the figure of Jeanne embodies the real, the metaphoric and the decorative. On the one hand, in works like *Après le bain* she is portrayed as the idealised bourgeois woman encapsulating the elegance and charm of *belle-époque* Paris. On the other, she is an idealised figure in a dream-state slumbering by a lake as in *Endormies*. These modish evocations heralded a new phase in Bunny's art in which the female form is transformed from a poeticised archetype into a figure of intimate modernity



Image 8 Rupert Bunny *Endormies (Sleeping)* c. 1904
Oil on canvas, 130.5 x 200.5 cm

Endormies captures the image of Jeanne in a moment of dreamy languor, her recumbent figure dramatically posed across the breadth of the canvas. A young woman, also resting, a motionless dog and bathing swans encircle her. The painting abounds in symbolic nuance: the scattered roses signify beauty;

the water denotes dreaming; the white swans suggest spiritual grace and purity; and the sleeping dog attests to the Bunnys' fidelity. The calm poetic atmosphere and decorative monumental scale of the painting suggest Puvis's influence, but the modish leisured style of the women, the concentrated colour and dynamic brushwork, firmly anchor it in the twentieth century.

In creating *Endormies* Bunny surely had in mind the sensuality and structure of Gustave Courbet's *Les demoiselles des bords de la Seine (Young ladies on the banks of the Seine)* 1857.⁴⁹ The painting provoked public outrage when it was first exhibited in Paris due to the artist's choice of subject – overt, possibly lesbian eroticism between two modern city ladies – which undermined the traditionally accepted portrayal of women as virtuous and pure.⁵⁰ The boldly exposed shoulder

⁴⁹ Collection of the Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris.

⁵⁰ The foreground figure's display of her undergarments and knowing gaze were considered more evocative and shocking than if she were depicted nude. There is intimation that Courbet depicted

and chest of the reclining figure in *Endormies* would have been similarly confronting to an Edwardian audience,⁵¹ although Bunny responded by stressing the luminous effects of colour and light, particularly apparent in the polychroming of creams, greens and blues invigorated with red, adding an overall richness.

Created around the same time as *Endormies*, *Après le bain* is perhaps the most celebrated of the ‘Feminine Arcady’ paintings due largely to its prominent notice at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1904 and subsequent acquisition by the French State for the Musée du Luxembourg’s foreign collection.⁵² Like the former work, *Après le bain* celebrates the allure and elegance of female beauty. It depicts three women leisurely washing and dressing in a Parisian bathhouse. They gaze into mirrors, a Symbolist metaphor frequently associated with femininity and intimating



Image 9 Rupert Bunny *Après le bain* (After the bath)
c. 1904, oil on canvas, 192 x 170 cm

spiritual reflection. An opalescent palette of lavish colours reminiscent of late 1890s French Art Nouveau, together with a Rococo love of textures, yields an effect that is both sumptuous and alluring.

the moment after the act of lovemaking.

⁵¹ While there was much more freedom during the Edwardian era, in general society retained a certain amount of sobriety. Publicly, the partly undressed reclining figure in *Endormies* would have been perceived as challenging the morals of the day in much the same way as John Singer Sargent’s *Madame X* (*Madame Pierre Gautreau*) 1883-84 defied its audiences. Working without a commission but with his sitter’s complicity, Sargent emphasised her daring personal style, showing the right strap of her gown slipping from her shoulder. At the Paris Salon of 1884, the portrait received more ridicule than praise. Some critics were offended by it, feeling that the almost unsupported gown implied impropriety. By 1889 it was revealed that Sargent had made alterations to the painting, making it more modest by repainting the strap on the shoulder from which it had fallen. When, eventually, it was purchased from the artist through the Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund in 1916 for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Sargent asked that the Museum disguise the sitter’s name.

⁵² *Après le bain* was the first of ten works by Bunny acquired by the French State.

Critics were fulsome in their praise for *Après le bain* when it was exhibited at the New Salon in 1904. Henri Frantz's review for *Studio* magazine gave extensive coverage, noting a similarity between Bunny's manner and that of the Pre-Raphaelites, and drew attention to the work's 'decorative feeling, richness of colouring and grace'.⁵³ Gustave Soulier, writing in *L'Art Décoratif*, praised the artist's 'firm modelling' and 'great delicacy and taste'.⁵⁴ In the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Pierre Baudin remarked on *Après le bain*'s 'remarkable style' and the influence of both Delacroix and Rubens on Bunny's painting.⁵⁵ But it was the influential critic Raymond Bouyer, writing in the June 1904 issue of *La Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne*, who offered the most incisive critical analysis, astutely linking the painting to Puvis's work:

We are discussing two exquisite poets: one foreign, M. Rupert Bunny, the other French, M. Aman-Jean. Our readers know the esteem in which we hold this modest and subtle Australian. *Après le bain* is a measured triumph of his thoughtful character, emotionally voluptuous and quite fascinating; with the charming modesty of real passion; one feels how he is captivated by these beautiful carefree women, in love with their own image, leaning over the mirror, smiling!

Neither Whistler nor Burne-Jones, the now-dead rivals, have inspired this albeit British evocation of a sumptuous Venice; the lissomness of the gesture and pallor of the smiles speaks of a Delacroix softened by a Puvis de Chavannes, art so to speak of the complimentary, such as a soft green against a beautiful red.

This poem is the most ingenious dream of the Salons.⁵⁶

Baudin and Bouyer's linking of Bunny to Delacroix is insightful. There is an obvious connection between Bunny's taste for the exotic, sumptuous colour and strong composition, massing figures into a unified and fluent arrangement, and Delacroix's

⁵³ Henri Frantz, 'Revue de Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts', in *The Studio* (London: 'The Studio' Ltd), vol. 32, 1904, p. 14.

⁵⁴ Gustave Soulier, 'La peinture du Salon', in *L'Art Décoratif*, no. 70, July 1904.

⁵⁵ Pierre Baudin, 'Les Salons de 1904, 2ème article', in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, June 1904, p. 478.

⁵⁶ Raymond Bouyer, 'Les Salons de 1904 – La peinture (11)', in *La Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne* (Paris), no. 87, June 1904, p. 424.

employment of such elements in his ambitious paintings of the 1820s and 1830s. On his regular visits to the Louvre, Bunny would have seen hanging in close proximity in the grand first-floor salon dedicated to large-format French nineteenth-century paintings three of Delacroix's most important pictures: *Mort de Sardanapale* (*The death of Sardanapalus*) 1827; *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (*Women of Algiers in their apartment*) 1834; and *Scène des massacres de Chios* (*The massacre at Chios*) 1825.⁵⁷ The superb *Mort de Sardanapale* is so enormous that Victor Hugo considered it 'beyond small minds'. Its sheer size alone (342 x 496cm) would have caught Bunny's attention, but so, too, would have its masterly technique and compositional complexity.

Originally titled *Une scène au bain* (*A bathing scene*), *Baigneurs* is an impressive representation of a group of bourgeois women relaxing in a languorous contemporary setting, a fashionable Parisian bathhouse. The gathering includes the



Image 10 Rupert Bunny *Baigneurs* (Bathers) 1906
Oil on canvas, 229 x 250 cm

central element of a mother and child; on the right of them is a draped standing bather and, to the left, two reclining women smoking cigarettes. Smoking by women was then frowned upon by society, but many activists, including possibly Bunny himself, equated the habit with women's desire for equality. In the background of the composition is a central pool with another group of women in various states of undress, lazing or bathing. The painting contains a profusion of symbolic references, led by various allusions to modish *Japonisme*, an influence that also absorbed John Russell during the latter part of his expatriatism in Paris from 1884–88. Dispersed around the foreground figures are teacups, fans and a bowl, all Japanese in design, and the

⁵⁷ Currently the three works hang sequentially in Salon 77 of the Denon Wing in the Louvre, Paris.

placement of two women in front of a red lacquer dressing screen in the upper-left background is reminiscent of the genre of nineteenth-century *ukiyo-e* woodblocks. The child reaching towards two ascending butterflies (symbolising transience) is dressed in a red kimono.

Additional layers of meaning are also revealed in *Baigneurs*: the scattered roses indicate that beauty and life are both ephemeral (thus reinforcing the sense of the spiritual) and the placement of women near water, a well-worn convention in French painting during the nineteenth century,⁵⁸ was often used as an allegory of abundance and the primacy of life. The central grouping of mother and child is an extended metaphor of the traditional ‘Madonna and child’ theme but, in idealising motherhood, Bunny was also exploiting the motif from a contemporary perspective. The impact of first-wave feminism at the turn of the century had led to a changing consciousness regarding the condition of women, transforming the meaning of motherhood, which opened up a far-ranging debate on sexual behaviour, family structure and the nature of mothering.⁵⁹ It had a significant influence upon narrative painting and images of motherhood proliferated at the annual Salons, including *Baigneurs* in 1906 at the New Salon, where Raymond Bouyer, critiquing the exhibition for *La Revue de l’Art Ancien et Moderne*, detected in it an ‘idleness ... opal atmosphere and decorative aspirations’.⁶⁰

En été is one of Bunny’s most ambitious paintings. It measures an imposing 250 x 300.5 cm and brings to mind the allegorical murals of the day, something he had long wanted to create. Exhibited at the New Salon in 1907, the painting epitomises the leisured spirit of *La Belle Époque*, elegantly capturing seven graceful women (each modelled on Jeanne Bunny) lounging inside a Parisian bathhouse, sipping iced tea, inhaling the scent of freshly picked roses and having their hair brushed. Bunny has depicted them in various stages of undress, conveying the sense of time passing slowly and lazily on a summer’s morning.⁶¹ The scene could be described as one of

⁵⁸ Courbet, Delacroix, Ingres and Cézanne, for example, all employed this convention in their work.

⁵⁹ Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the 19th Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1984, p. xi.

⁶⁰ Raymond Bouyer, ‘Les Salons de 1906 – La peinture (1)’, in *La Revue de l’Art Ancien et Moderne* (Paris), 1906, p. 375.

⁶¹ *En été* is also known as *A summer’s morning*.

self-indulgence and in his review of the 1907 New Salon for *L'Art et les Artistes*, the writer Maurice Guillemot styled it a form of 'decadence'.⁶² Certainly there is an element of profligacy in Bunny's elaborate 'staging' of *En été*, but this more likely relates to his interest in spectacle through theatre than to any intent to criticise or challenge the lifestyle of the French bourgeoisie.



Image 11 Rupert Bunny *En été (Summer time)* c. 1907
Oil on canvas, 250 x 300.5 cm

The aura of graceful sensuality implicit in works such as *Endormies*, *Baigneurs* and *En été* evokes the same physical preoccupation characteristic of Pierre-Auguste Renoir's paintings of semi-clothed and unclothed women. In the 1880s, influenced by the Symbolist absorption in classicism, Renoir sought to move his art beyond Impressionism and

forge a link between modern art and the classical tradition of French painting, represented for him by such great painters as François Girardon and Nicolas Poussin. The outcome was large-scale compositions of semi-clothed women and nude bathers luxuriating in the light and warmth of gardens or by streams and lakes, which occupied his attention and attracted widespread notice over the next decade. In 1904, around the time Bunny painted *Endormies* and *Après le bain*, a survey exhibition of Renoir's paintings was shown in the second Salon d'Automne held at the Grand Palais.⁶³ An enthusiast of this Salon,⁶⁴ Bunny surely would have seen and been inspired by these works.

There is no direct evidence to suggest Renoir influenced Bunny, but there are obvious parallels in their work, especially marked in their choice and treatment of subject matter. Both artists used their respective spouses as the principal models for

⁶² Maurice Guillemot, 'Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts', in *L'Art et les Artistes*, no. 26, May 1907, pp. 80–81.

⁶³ Comprising thirty-five paintings, the exhibition was organised as part of the second annual Salon d'Automne held from 15 October to 15 November 1904.

⁶⁴ Bunny exhibited at the first Salon d'Automne in 1903 and then intermittently until 1931.

their portrayals of modern womanhood. Similarly, each moved beyond the increasingly outmoded convention of positing the image of women as figurative expressions of idealised beauty and virtue (a product of the masculine imagination) and embraced it from a contemporary experience and perspective. Surrounded by nature or set in contemporary interior spaces, Renoir and Bunny's women are identifiably modern-day European rather than mythical or exotic representations of the past. The poise and sculptural curve of the bodies and the relaxed balance between fashion and physicality in the work of both artists are evocative of feminine sensuality in a new era.

The 'Feminine Arcady' series anticipates Bunny's shift to a form of modern decorative painting around 1913 that aligned his work with larger Parisian trends. Synthesising the Fauvist painterly concern with high-keyed, vibrant colour and the vigorous rhythmic gesture of the revolutionary new dance troupe, the Ballets Russes, the *Danse chromatique* proclaimed a radically new and distinctive vision, confirming that Bunny's assimilation into French culture was now absolute.

The Development of a Distinctive Vision: *Danse chromatique*

Bunny encountered Fauvism at its genesis, almost certainly witnessing Henri Matisse's first solo exhibition at Galerie Vollard in 1904⁶⁵ and as an exhibitor at the Salon d'Automne of 1905, where Matisse along with Derain, Vlaminck and others unveiled some of the most daring works associated with the style. With Bunny's regular exposure to Matisse's work, including as a juror of the 1910 Salon d'Automne⁶⁶ where the painter's controversial *La danse II* (*Dance II*) and *La musique* (*Music*) debuted, his interest in the expressive potential of colour expanded. Concentrated colour had already begun to infuse several of Bunny's 'Feminine Arcady' paintings, but in intermediate works like *Mme Sada Yacco 'Le Shogun'* (*Scène de la folie*) (*Ms Sada Yacco 'Shogun' (Scene of folly)*) c. 1907⁶⁷ linking that series to the *Danse chromatique*, it found new expression. In this full-length portrait of the famed Japanese dancer and actress, the artist's intensified colour dualities,

⁶⁵ 'Exposition des Oeuvres du Peintre Henri Matisse', Galerie Vollard, Paris, 1–18 June 1904. The exhibition comprised forty-six works, with a catalogue preface written by Roger Marx.

⁶⁶ Deborah Edwards, p. 106.

⁶⁷ The work is in the Stuartholme-Behan Collection of Australian Art, The University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane.

stylised form and embracement of a boldly flattened pictorial space announce the Fauve-oriented principles of decorative organisation that would soon embody his *Danse chromatique* works. Yacco's performances were invigorated with a rhythmic fusion of gesture, colour and stylisation, which Bunny recognised as corresponding with his own artistic aspirations. These ambitions would shortly be transformed by his encounter with the creative explosion that was the Ballets Russes.

The Ballets Russes made its first appearance in Paris in the 1909 *Saison Russe*,⁶⁸ a sensational season of dance organised by the Russian-born impresario, Sergei Diaghilev. The Ballet integrated traditional dance narratives with folk art, contemporary design and music, and new approaches to choreography. Raising every aspect of performance – dance, choreography, music, stage and costume design – to an equal level of inventiveness and excellence, Diaghilev unleashed a torrent of creative activity on French theatre, placing the formerly declining art of ballet into the modernist framework of early twentieth century design and culture. The impresario harnessed the new and powerful expressiveness of Post-Impressionism and the visionary elements of Cubism, linking them to new forms of music built around atonalism and primitive rhythms.⁶⁹ Innovative composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Claude Debussy and Erik Satie gave new musical form to Ballets Russes. Russian designers Léon Bakst and Alexandre Benois provided the sumptuous and exotic spectacle of the first performances.⁷⁰ Artists of the emerging Russian and European avant-garde soon joined them – Georges Braque, Giorgio de Chirico, Natalia Goncharova, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, among others. Choreographers and dancers noted for their technical brio, including Mikhail Fokine, Bronislava Nijinska, Vaslav Nijinsky and Léonide Massine, all brought new powerful energy to Ballets Russes.

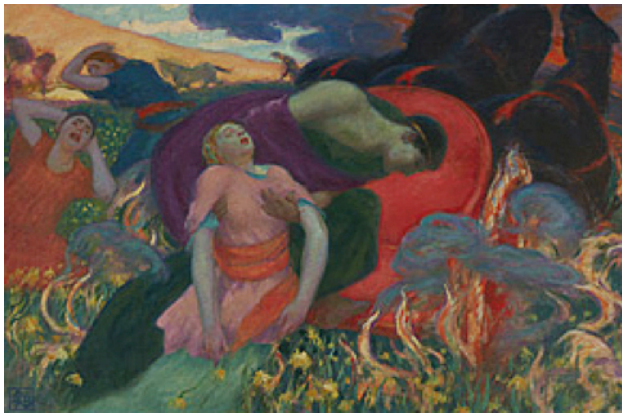
As a regular theatregoer, Bunny attended many of Ballets Russes's early Parisian

⁶⁸ The company did not use the name Ballets Russes until 1910.

⁶⁹ Introduced in 1909, the repertory of atonalism opposed the system of tonal hierarchies that characterised classical European music between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. It is differentiated by the occurrence of pitches in novel combinations as well as by the occurrence of familiar pitch amalgamations in unfamiliar environments.

⁷⁰ The five ballet productions for Ballets Russes's first Paris *Saison Russe* were: *Le Pavillon d'Armide*; 'Polovtsian Dances' from act 2 of the opera *Prince Igor*; *Le Festin*; *Les Sylphides*; and *Cléopâtre*.

performances and was inspired by their stylistic innovations: an emotive self-expression over a *corps de ballet* of conventional form; a unified and harmonious repertoire; creative collaboration between art forms; and cultural quotation often reflecting exotic ethnicities. Deeply inspired by Diaghilev's dance productions, Bunny promptly began formulating his work as a form of visual ballet by incorporating many theatrical elements or hybrid variations in his *Danse chromatique* – bold colour, rhythmic movement, elaborate patterning, exotic embellishment, and theatricality itself. Bunny's approach also assimilated mythical imagery from Symbolism and Matisse's Fauve interactions between dynamic gesture and form.



**Image 12 Rupert Bunny *Le viol de Persephone*
(*The rape of Persephone*) c. 1913
Oil on canvas, 54.5 x 81 cm**

By 1913 in dynamically painted images of mythological subjects, Bunny began to reveal his reactions to these various influences, with the cathartic impact of Ballets Russes's performance in May of *Le sacré du printemps* (*The rite of spring*)⁷¹ producing an immediate effect. The ballet

premiered to enormous controversy due to the complex rhythmic structures and dissonances of Stravinsky's innovative score, its radical choreography by the young Nijinsky, and Nikolai Roerich's Orientalist set and costuming. Bunny appropriated its core theme, the mystery and creative power of spring, which he fused with Russian primitivist imagery as the impetus for the creation of vigorous narratives in two of his most important works, *Le viol de Persephone* (*The rape of Persephone*) c. 1913 and *Echo et Narcissus* c. 1913-16.⁷²

In his portrayal of Hades in the act of abducting Persephone, Bunny produced a

⁷¹ Henri Quittard, review of *Le Sacré du Printemps*, in *Le Figaro*, 31 May 1913, cited in Thomas Kelly, *First Nights: Five Musical Premieres* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2000, p. 307.

⁷² *The rape of Persephone* is in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and *Echo and Narcissus* is in the possession of the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

spectacular rhythmic composition, a mutually enhancing fusion of writhing form and opulent colour (unusual harmonies of pale green, reds, mauve, pink and turquoise), fervently expressed. In *The Art of Australia* Robert Hughes remarks somewhat paradoxically of *The rape of Persephone*, ‘He [Bunny] thought the Fauves bunglers, but the savage reds, lilacs and greens ... are as saturated with expressive vigour as any Matisse’.⁷³ Bunny’s mastery as a superb colourist is acknowledged further in the hued vibrancy of *Echo and Narcissus*. The striking red-green complementary contrast (a recurrent chromatic code in the *Danse chromatique* series) of the blazing background forms a vivid tapestry-like surface, where glowing colour and rhythmic form dramatically unite. Echo’s poignant gesture towards the unemotional Narcissus – a portent of her ill-fated ending in the encompassing fiery landscape – emulates the stylised attitudes adopted in Nijinsky’s powerfully choreographed version.

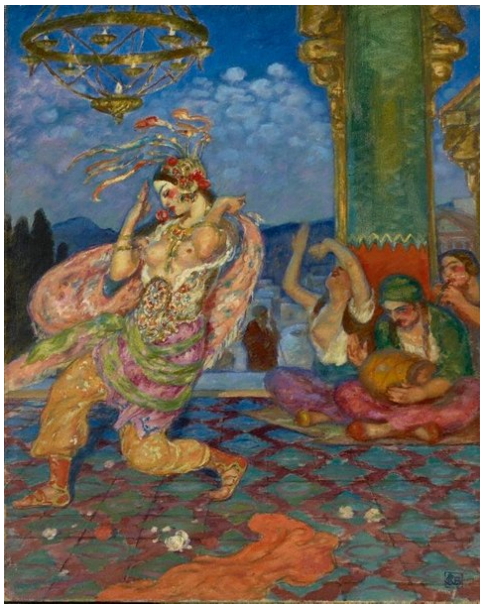


Image 13 Rupert Bunny *Salomé* c. 1919
Oil on canvas, 81 x 65.5 cm

Bunny’s great ability as an assimilator of artistic influence is dynamically distilled in the decoratively formulated *Salomé* c. 1919.⁷⁴ The exotic dancer could easily have been grafted from a Greek terracotta vase painting via elaborations in the Ballet Russes choreography and design. The colours and accoutrements of the Orient, including the figure’s ornately patterned costume, the candelabrum and elaborate rug, have been melded into a spectacular orientalist tableau, where the theatricalised space recalls the artifice of a

Ballets Russes stage set. The centrality of rhythm and colour as abstract entities in Bunny’s ‘coloured dance’ fantasies is forcefully conveyed. Deborah Edwards notes, ‘Eclecticism became exoticism as the union between originary myths of Western civilisation and energised rhythms and opulent colour was wrapped in an Orientalism

⁷³ Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia* (Middlesex: Penguin), 1970, p. 108.

⁷⁴ Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

... also influenced by Matisse's 'near Eastern' ambience'.⁷⁵ The artist's expressive vision under diverse influences is fully realised in an image of supreme brilliance and vigour.

Monotype printing formed an important complement to Bunny's painting. The process represents the broader transformation of his artistic practice, circumventing the more structured confines of studio painting and extending his expression and practical treatment of ideas. Bunny's painter–printmaker approach to work distinguished him from the other five case studies and also from nearly all other Australian expatriates in Europe at the time, most of whom worked in a single medium.⁷⁶ Bunny started working with monotyping in 1898, around the same time that Edgar Degas and Paul Gauguin were reviving the mid seventeenth-century practice. The large contingent of American artists in Paris is known to have popularised the process within their expatriate community, and it is likely that Bunny's initial engagement with monotype printing came via this route.⁷⁷ Combining elements of printmaking, painting and drawing, monotype is a hybrid process based on the printed outcome of paintwork. For Bunny the technique was an ideal method through which to further expound the *Danse chromatique* concept to achieve a uniquely diffused surface quality which direct painting could not obtain.

An important commission from Galeries Georges Petit, described by Emile Zola as the 'apotheosis' of Parisian art dealers, of 100 monotypes for exhibition in early 1921,⁷⁸ inveigled Bunny to refocus his attention on the medium. The scope of the project allowed him to develop images with a dual focus on the relationship of their theme with the monotype's distinctive surface aesthetic. The resultant prints comprise a decorative balletic structure, echoing the stylistic formulation of Bunny's related paintings and, thus, the contemporary influences of Fauvism and the Ballets Russes. They are infused with his detailed memory of Matisse's early intense colouring and his own proficiency in realising rhythmically enhanced forms. *Fresque*

⁷⁵ Deborah Edwards, p. 118.

⁷⁶ Will Dyson, Margaret Preston and Thea Proctor, however, also succeeded as painter–printmakers in Europe at that time.

⁷⁷ Denise Mimmocchi, 'Dreaming before the task of abstraction: Rupert Bunny's monotypes', in Deborah Edwards, *Rupert Bunny: Artist in Paris*, op. cit., p. 136.

⁷⁸ 'Exposition de Monotypes, Rupert Bunny', Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, 16–31 March 1921.

(*Fresco*) c. 1921, with its elevated sense of spontaneity and freedom of form and colour, reflects the expressive, liberated style that characterised Bunny's monotype oeuvre of the early 1920s. Here, the medium's surface uniformity and translucence enhances the impression of a flat textural quality with the effect of a mural on a miniature scale. The four gambolling mythical figures are used as channels for moving colour through pictorial space, resembling Matisse's rhythmical succession of dancing nudes of 1909–10. Rather than expressing narrative as in the 'Brittany idylls' monotypes of the late 1890s, in these prints the allegorical figures have a more formal purpose, activating the interplay of various pictorial elements. They appealed to what the Australian art critic and writer Edith Fry refers to as Bunny's 'decorative sense' and 'imaginative and emotional qualities'.⁷⁹

Bunny held a second exhibition of monotypes at Galeries Georges Petit in 1924, and like the first it was financially and critically successful.⁸⁰ Success of this kind was generally rare among Australian expatriates, with most wrestling with financial

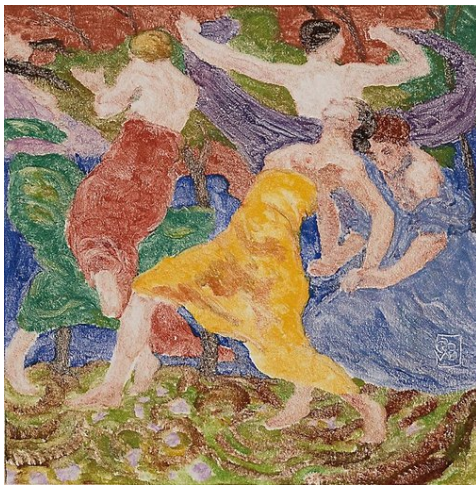


Image 14 Rupert Bunny *Fresque (Fresco)* c. 1921
Colour monotype, sheet 29 x 28 cm

benevolent Australians like the soprano Nellie Melba.

hardship at various times. Bunny, however, was more fortunate. In 1904, the art collector and philanthropist Alfred Felton died, bequeathing to him a lifetime annual annuity of £100.⁸¹ This he augmented with additional earnings from commercial gallery sales, acquisitions by the French government and private portrait commissions, largely from

Spanning three decades, Bunny's paintings and monotypes represent through

⁷⁹ Edith M. Fry, 'The recent works of Rupert Bunny', in *Drawing and Design* (London), no. 1, August 1921, p. 534.

⁸⁰ Undated letter, Robert Campbell to John Young, Robert Campbell Papers, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, MS1999.2, quoted in Denise Mimmocchi, p. 149.

⁸¹ Alfred Felton had been a close friend of the artist's father, Brice Bunny. Felton purchased and then gifted Rupert Bunny's *Sea idyll* c. 1890 to the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in 1892.

concentrated bodies of work a prolific and vigorous art practice reflecting his absorption of various artistic influences. A cosmopolitan with bohemian propensities, Bunny actively embraced expatriatism. After the First World War, the Bunnys purchased a rural cottage at Les Landes in the Loire Valley in central France, dividing their time between this region and Paris. The move coincided with a decade of landscape painting, Bunny using the cottage as a base from which to undertake painting trips across France. Jeanne Bunny died at Les Landes in 1933, her death heralding the end of Bunny's life abroad. This outcome was like that of John Russell following the premature death of his wife Marianna on Belle-Île twenty-five years earlier, both artists eventually returning permanently to Australia.⁸² Bunny resettled in Melbourne, taking a flat in South Yarra which was, according to Arnold Shore,

a couple of ... unattractive rooms. It was sad to see him in them knowing he'd been used to a wife and a home in the world centre of art, and had secured his measure of international fame ... in these rooms, with little furniture beyond his easel and a bed, it always seemed as though he had either just moved in or was about to move out.⁸³

Shore's poignant observation portrays an artist seemingly in a state of flux, caught between two worlds, between 'home' and 'away' and conceivably confronting the predicament of whether to 'stay, go or come'.

Un Succès Français: Bunny's Achievements

The issue of where to place Bunny remains a conundrum. Was he authentically Australian or a cultural hybrid? My analysis positions him at the interstice, the intervening space between two cultures (to apply Homi Bhabha's theory cited in the previous chapter) in which, through his assimilation of a French and thus European turn-of-the-century aesthetic, he played a crucial part in the development of Australian art. Cultural hybridity accorded Bunny the rare distinction of influencing two cultures, his homeland and also his adopted home. Writing for *Le Figaro* in 1886, the year of Bunny's arrival in Paris, the critic Albert Wolff observed,

⁸² Marianna Russell died in 1908. Over the next thirteen years John Russell lived an itinerant life in Europe, eventually arriving in Sydney in 1921 and settling there permanently in 1924.

⁸³ Arnold Shore, 'Shy Rupert Bunny: Genius whose art spoke for him', in *The Age* (Melbourne), 7 December 1957, p. 18.

‘Nowhere else can we assemble so great a gathering of men who have marked out the luminous phases of art’.⁸⁴ It was in this highly competitive environment that Bunny ‘secured his measure of international fame’,⁸⁵ testing himself against the innumerable French and foreign artists then working in Paris. Embracing influences that most strongly engaged him – Symbolism’s subjective spiritual states through mythical imagery, Fauvism’s intense exuberant colour, and the visual brilliance of Ballets Russes – Bunny vigorously articulated them in a succession of superbly constructed works.

Between 1904 and 1929, beginning with the acquisition of *Après le bain*, the French government purchased ten works by Bunny for the Musée du Luxembourg, the leading French national gallery devoted to contemporary art.⁸⁶ Having work purchased by the State was one of the highest honours that could be bestowed on a living artist, a substantial recognition of Bunny’s significance by official French art circles. The French Republic afforded no other Australian artist such dedicated patronage. By 1919, foreign works accounted for a quarter of the 1200 paintings in the collection of the Musée du Luxembourg.⁸⁷ Among the estimated 300 pictures by overseas artists, three were by Bunny, a remarkable individual achievement. Formal institutional support of this kind during an artist’s lifetime was rare, whether for an expatriate or resident French artist. It gave formal recognition of Bunny’s achievement within the wider French context, a strategic concern for the status-conscious French cultural elite, the key source of support and benefaction for artists.

Bunny’s exhibition history on foreign shores was exceptional. While he exhibited in England, Hungary and the United States, his main focus was France.⁸⁸ He exhibited regularly in all three leading Paris Salons: the Société des Artistes Français, Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, and Salon d’Automne, as well as the less prominent Salon

⁸⁴ Albert Wolff, ‘La capitale de l’art’, in *Le Figaro* (Paris), 1886, p. 5.

⁸⁵ Arnold Shore, p. 18.

⁸⁶ The government acquired nine paintings and one monotype, which were subsequently distributed to various French institutions. Another three works by Bunny were acquired for the collections of the Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris; Musée Léon Dierx, St Denis de la Réunion; and Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg.

⁸⁷ Anne Gérard, ‘Un succès parisien: Rupert Bunny’s achievements’, in Deborah Edwards, p. 163.

⁸⁸ In addition to France, Bunny also exhibited in England, including with the Royal Academy; in the Budapest International exhibitions; and in the Carnegie International exhibitions in Pittsburgh.

de Peinture et Sculpture and the Salon de Lyon.⁸⁹ In 1890, thanks to his painting *Tritons* being hung at the Old Salon, Bunny received the first *mention honorable* awarded to an Australian artist. In 1904, he was elected an *associé* and eight years later a *sociétaire* of the New Salon. Additionally, in 1904, he became a *sociétaire* of the progressive Salon d'Automne. Henceforth Bunny became a prominent figure in the Parisian art world – ‘*un peintre des plus parisiens*, one of the most Parisian painters’, according to Pierre Lafitte.⁹⁰

Solo exhibition at Galeries Silberberg in 1903 and a second two years later at Galerie Graves strengthened Bunny's standing in the Paris art world. It was, however, his association with the influential dealer Georges Petit that proved most valuable. One of the two top commercial gallery dealers in Paris (the other was Galerie Durand-Ruel), by the 1890s Petit had wrested many of France's best artists from his rival. A formidable salesman, Petit handled the work of the artistic giants Monet, Rodin and Sisley as well as many other successful painters and sculptors of the period. That Bunny was taken on by Petit and held five solo exhibitions with his gallery (in 1917, 1921, 1922, 1924 and 1929) highlights the importance with which he was held in Paris.

Bunny made just four return trips to Australia during his expatriatism, the first in 1911 followed an absence of twenty-seven years. His commitment and attachment were to France, not Australia. Bunny had clearly adapted to his host culture, and in the final analysis he felt most at home in France; yet he was never detached from a home society, and certainly not the ‘displaced Australian’ claimed by Mary Eagle.⁹¹ His eventual return to Melbourne came soon after the death of Jeanne. With her passing Bunny's most vital link to France had been broken. Aged almost seventy, alone and, like most artists, affected by the Great Depression, his return marked the last phase of an intensely rich and productive life.

⁸⁹ Bunny exhibited at the Salon de Peinture et Sculpture in 1892 and 1893, and at the Salon de Lyon in 1905, 1914 and 1920.

⁹⁰ Pierre Lafitte (ed.), ‘Le Salon de 1906: La Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts’, in *Je Sais Tout: Magazine Encyclopédique Illustré* (Paris), 15 April 1906, p. 272.

⁹¹ Mary Eagle, p. 16.

Summary

Bunny vigorously embraced *fin-de-siècle* Paris, engaging intensely with its outlook of cultural openness and diversity. Self-possessed and outgoing, he mixed effortlessly with local and foreign artists as well as with the French bourgeoisie, coming into contact with some of the best-known figures in Parisian society through the fashionable artistic and literary salons. Bunny quickly connected with the leading official art Salons and private galleries, eventually forming a successful business relationship with the prominent art dealer Georges Petit. These opportunities exposed his work to important critics and collectors as well as to the French State, earning him unprecedented critical approval within recognised circles of the Parisian artistic milieu.

Bunny relished the spirit and élan of Parisian culture, producing three extraordinary cycles of work in painting as well as in print, demonstrating an Australian artist greatly enjoying the fruits of expatriate life. Receptive to contemporary trends, Bunny espoused many of the stylistic principles of Symbolism and Fauvism, which together with the energy and exoticism of the innovative productions of the itinerant Ballets Russes provided key stimuli for his art. Jeanne Morel, Bunny's partner, chief model and vital link to France, remained the inspirational source for his creativity.

Bunny was 'the complete cosmopolitan',⁹² coming from a singular, unconventional position: two worlds, two languages, tradition and modernity, and dream and reality. His ability to intersect these differences produced a remarkable vision and one deeply reflective of the assimilative experience.

⁹² Humphrey McQueen, p. 55.

Chapter 3: John Russell – Belle-Île: Being and Place

Introduction



Image 15 John Russell, c. 1883

John Russell was the antithesis of Rupert Bunny, retreating from the urbanity and cosmopolitanism of Paris and embracing a secluded rustic life on Belle-Île, a French island off the coast of Brittany in north-western France. In a sense, Russell did not fully relinquish his outsider status as an expatriate, living and working in a remarkable landscape that struck a chord with his early development in Australia. He did not desire the sophistication and modernity of urban living but rather its opposite, the simplicity and robustness of La Côte Sauvage, a rugged windswept

landscape overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Here, over two decades from 1888 to 1908, he established his home, family and career, drawing inspiration from his physical surrounds and conveying it vigorously on canvas.

While most analyses of Russell have focused on his close links to Impressionism as the main impetus for his creativity, in this chapter I investigate another equally significant aspect: his deep connection to place, specifically to La Côte Sauvage, as a major inspirational focus. In locating a sense of place on Belle-Île, Russell engaged in an extraordinary painterly dialogue celebrating his strong visceral connection with this landscape, which he expressed through a vibrant Impressionist mode.

I begin with an examination of Russell's process of assimilation into French culture, starting with the four years he spent in Paris after what had been primarily an Anglo-Australian experience in Sydney and London. For Russell Paris became the interstice to use Homi Bhabha's example, a fluid 'in-between space' for 'elaborating strategies of selfhood'¹ during the process of his assimilation. It was a period that witnessed remarkable friendships with some of the most influential artists of the period, which had important consequences for Russell's art. I then explore his move to Port-

¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge), 1994, pp. 1–2.

Goulphar, a rocky inlet overlooking the wild coast and stormy seas of La Côte Sauvage, where he settled and established an idyllic life with his French wife and family. The notion of ‘being and place’, cogently expounded by twentieth-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger, is central to the argument I develop regarding Russell’s relationship with La Côte Sauvage and the paintings emanating from his Belle-Île period.

Eight key paintings created between c. 1890 and 1905 are then examined as an expression of the dynamics that invigorated Russell’s imagination, his strong physical and emotional connection to place expressed through an Impressionist aesthetic that accentuated what was clearly a lifelong passion for colour. Place, linking the artist’s interest in Neo-Impressionism and Fauvism, as a Post-Impressionist proposition is next investigated. He articulated this through a modernist mode further expanding the importance of colour as the expressive means by which his feelings were conveyed. I conclude by emphasising Russell’s significant achievements through expatriatism, which won him almost immediate recognition in France, but belated acknowledgement in Australia.

Paris: A Precursor to Belle-Île

Russell arrived in Paris in 1884, one of the first in a wave of Australian artists of his generation to reside there.² Relatively inexperienced but extremely wealthy,³ the twenty-six-year-old artist had recently trained under the French expatriate painter–etcher Alphonse Legros at London’s Slade School of Fine Art.⁴ At a time when numerous foreign artists began establishing themselves in Paris, Russell’s move there corroborated his commitment to make art a lifetime pursuit, and to fulfil this commitment in one of the world’s foremost centres of learning and the arts. He affirmed this in a letter to his friend Tom Roberts shortly before leaving London: ‘t’is mine word which compels me to stick to the original plan – duty points to

² Bertram Mackennal also arrived in 1884, then the only other important Australian artist living in Paris.

³ Upon his father John Russell senior’s death in 1879, Russell inherited a perpetual annuity of between £2,000 and £3,000.

⁴ Russell studied intermittently at the Slade School between 1881 and 1884, between visits to Australia and Spain.

Paris'.⁵

Like many of his student contemporaries, Russell saw Paris primarily as an opportunity to consolidate his London art training by studying at one of the city's many private ateliers, a system of art instruction then internationally acclaimed mainly for its enlightened teaching. Undoubtedly Russell was also attracted by the intense vitality of Paris. As the correspondent for the San Francisco *Daily Alta California* in March 1884 observed:

To the stranger ... the wide and beautiful boulevards of Paris ... filled with an ever-moving panorama of humanity, offer a scene full of pleasure, excitement and interest. I have seen all the great cities of Europe, from London to Constantinople ... and Paris carries off the palm for beauty and brilliancy ... Every civilised nation is represented in the people who throng [its] fashionable promenades.⁶

Unlike Rupert Bunny who favoured the more fashionable and cosmopolitan Left Bank, Russell settled in Montmartre, a semi-rural working-class district with a lively bohemian culture that attracted the city's intellectual and artistic community. Russell's abode in boulevard de Clichy, an avenue dotted with the studios of aspiring painters such as Edgar Degas, Auguste Renoir, Georges Seurat and Paul Signac,⁷ placed him, physically at least, in the vanguard of modernism. His subsequent move to neighbouring Villa des Arts, the site of some fifty artists' studios (later occupied by Signac and Paul Cézanne among others) built on a detached plot of Montmartre Cemetery,⁸ which he kept until his death, suggests that Russell aligned himself with the Parisian avant-garde or indeed pushed the boundaries of what was accepted as the norm or status quo. Although a more conservative painter, fellow case study

⁵ Letter dated 11 September 1884, John Russell to Tom Roberts, Tom Roberts Correspondence and Papers, 1884–1931, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁶ Correspondent, 'Life in Paris', in *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco), vol. 36, no. 12402, 31 March 1884, p. 1.

⁷ Russell resided at 73 boulevard de Clichy, Degas at no. 6, Renoir at no 11, Seurat at 128 bis and Signac at 130 boulevard de Clichy. Information sourced from the lifestyle magazine *Maisons Côte Ouest* (Boulogne Billancourt), July/August 2000, n. p.

⁸ A marble plaque located at the main gate of Villa des Arts records Signac and Cézanne as eminent residents. In the late nineteenth century many of the tenants were sculptors and craftspeople supplying statues and other carvings for Montmartre Cemetery. The Villa is owned presently by the City of Paris and continues to operate as artists' studios.

George Coates, like Russell, also tested artistic convention, identifying with other outsiders (émigrés, artists and the like) in his London portraits rather than embracing the Edwardian predilection to represent nobility and the rising middle class. In portraying the ‘new woman’, including many lesbians, in her paintings, and living an alternative same-sex lifestyle in Paris, Agnes Goodsir was also an ‘interloper’. Fate predestined the three artists never to meet: Coates left Paris for London in 1900, the same year Goodsir arrived, and Russell remained in relative seclusion on Belle-Île.

Dissatisfied with the congested classes at the popular Académie Julian, Russell, shortly after his arrival in Paris embarked on three years’ study at the smaller and more exclusive studio of the academician and leading history painter Fernand Cormon. Cormon exemplified the method of teaching then championed by the private atelier system – mastering daily the study of the nude in drawing and painting to enhance artistic skill, and studying masterworks in the Louvre or visiting the annual Salons, thus strengthening the academic instruction that had underpinned Russell’s training at the Slade. Russell was joined at the atelier by a group of radical students who would soon play a significant role in the great artistic ferment of the time – Louis Anquetin and Émile Bernard, who spearheaded Synthetism in the late 1880s, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Vincent van Gogh. Russell’s legendary friendship with van Gogh, started at Cormon’s⁹ and lasted four years until the latter’s death in 1890.¹⁰ It demonstrates the bonding of two outsiders from disparate cultures, one Australian and the other Dutch, joining forces or ‘coexisting within ... differences’, to quote sociologist Gérard Bouchard’s integrational model,¹¹ during the early stages of their cultural adaptation. Two portrayals of van Gogh by Russell around this time corroborate their close friendship.

Russell’s conté sketch *Cinq études de Vincent van Gogh* (*Five studies of Vincent van Gogh*) c. 1886–88,¹² shows him hollow-cheeked and with shaved head, the dramatic contrast of light and shade and emphatic drawing indicating something of van

⁹ Van Gogh studied at Cormon’s for three months in early 1886. Quoted in Timothy J. Standring and Louis van Tilborgh, *Becoming van Gogh* (Denver: Denver Art Museum), 2012, p. 254.

¹⁰ The friendship between Russell and van Gogh is explored in Ann Galbally, *A Remarkable Friendship: Vincent van Gogh and John Peter Russell* (Melbourne: Miegunyah), 2008.

¹¹ See Gérard Bouchard, ‘What is interculturalism?’ *McGill Law Journal* (Montreal: McGill University), vol. 56, no. 2, 2010, pp. 437–68.

¹² Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

Gogh's formidable personality.¹³ Russell had clearly grasped Cormon's rigorous teaching methods of delineating and modelling form (*dessin ombré*). At the end of 1886 he painted van Gogh's portrait, one of the few artists to do so. A half study painted in an academic manner, *Portrait de Vincent van Gogh*¹⁴ shows the figure in a traditional three-quarter pose. The dramatic light and dark contrasts of the head, roughly painted hand and black, flat mass of the background are formulaic in style, but close inspection of the lighter colouring (clear reds and yellows) and looser brushwork of the face and hand reveals glimmerings of Impressionism, foreshadowing Russell's espousal of this technique as the basis for his painting. Russell gave the portrait to van Gogh as a mark of their friendship.¹⁵ We know that he prized it, later asking his brother Theo to 'carefully keep my portrait by Russell that I am so fond of'.¹⁶

As with Bunny, who by this time was also residing in Paris and embracing more mainstream Symbolism, artistic influences and bonds can be applied to measure Russell's early assimilation into the local milieu. While Signac most likely initiated his strong interest in colour, it was van Gogh who prompted Russell's continued colour experimentation and radically altered, Japanese-inspired use of pictorial space. Already acquaintances through their contact at the Atelier Cormon, the trio undertook painting excursions together along the waterways of the Seine.¹⁷ By 1886 Russell was conversant with Signac's Divisionist style,¹⁸ and while he was aware he was in the throes of an important transformation in art, he was somewhat sceptical of the modernism then taking place around him. In October 1887 he confided to Tom Roberts in Melbourne, 'Darned fools spotting canvas with small points of pure

¹³ Ann Galbally, p. 107.

¹⁴ Collection of the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

¹⁵ An inscription in the artist's hand on the undersurface of the painting reads: 'VINCENT/ JP Russell, Pictor [Painter], Amitié [In friendship]/ Paris, 1886'. See *Van Gogh's Studio Practice: Russell's Impression of van Gogh* (video), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6z46c93SXQ>, accessed 4 April 2014.

¹⁶ Undated letter (September 1889), Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, quoted in V. W. van Gogh (introd.), *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society), vol. 3, 1959, p. 205.

¹⁷ Ursula Prunster, *Belle-Île: Monet, Russell & Matisse in Brittany* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales), 2001, p. 46.

¹⁸ Russell is known to have visited the eighth and last Impressionist exhibition in May 1886 at La Maison Dorée, where the divided-colour paintings of Signac and Seurat were shown.

colour. T'is as fashionable as gulls wings for hats'.¹⁹ Paradoxically, a decade or so later Russell started using the palette and directional brushstrokes redolent of Divisionism.

While Signac and van Gogh were important touchstones in acquainting Russell with modern art, it was a chance meeting with Claude Monet while holidaying on Belle-Île in the autumn of 1886 that was pivotal. Eighteen years' Russell's senior and a leading if not yet renowned painter, Monet's immediate friendship was a critical turning point for Russell, strengthening his growing interest in Impressionism and, by example of Monet's artistic skill and knowledge, his own lifetime commitment to painting. That Russell engaged Monet over an eleven-day period on the island,²⁰ studying, walking and dining with him, suggests that he was already an admirer of the artist's work. Russell closely observed the painter working *en plein-air*, which provided him with a first-hand introduction to the Impressionist technique from the principal figure of the movement. Within a year Russell, too, adopted the high-keyed palette and separate brushwork that he had witnessed in Monet's company.

Inspired, Russell expounded Monet's modernistic technique in letters to Roberts, in conversation and correspondence with van Gogh, and later, by example, with Henri Matisse on Belle-Île. Gustave Geffroy, the prominent French art critic and early biographer of Monet, wrote encouragingly of his Belle-Île paintings in several contemporary articles for the activist newspaper, *La Justice*: 'Here, in front of these masterfully, concisely designed canvases of such bold exactitude, before these luminous works, so steeped in the surrounding atmosphere and permeated by the light ... one has the feeling that something new, something great, has made its appearance in art'.²¹ Geffroy's astute observations, and the acclaim the paintings received when they were exhibited in 1887,²² beg the question: did Russell have any inkling that his brief accidental encounter with Monet would be of such significance, both for him and the avant-garde artists whom he associated with and influenced,

¹⁹ Letter dated 5 October 1887, John Russell to Tom Roberts, Tom Roberts Correspondence and Papers, 1884–1931, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

²⁰ They met between 17–28 September 1886. See Ursula Prunster, p. 29.

²¹ Quoted in Gustave Geffroy, *Claude Monet: Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre* (1922). Reprinted in the same chronicle published by Éditions Macula, Paris in 1980, p. 185.

²² Ten of Monet's Belle-Île paintings were exhibited in the sixth 'Exposition Internationale de Peinture et de Sculpture' at Galerie Georges Petit, Paris in May–June 1887.

notably van Gogh and Matisse? Monet's correspondence to Alice Hoschedé at the time suggests he saw their meeting as one of simple friendship and kindness,²³ but for Russell it was a defining moment.



Image 16 John Russell *Pivoines et tête d'une femme* (*Peonies and head of a woman*) 1887
Oil on canvas, 40.5 x 65 cm

Monet's impact is evident in Russell's *Pivoines et tête d'une femme* (*Peonies and head of a woman*) 1887,²⁴ one of a related group of small paintings where the head of the sitter is set against a background pattern of flowers. The bright colours and swiftly applied fragmented

brushstrokes are typical of Impressionism. So too, is the *plein-air* setting, most likely a garden at Longpré-les-Corps-Saints in Picardy, north of Paris where Russell spent the summer of 1887. Russell's appreciation of Japanese art through van Gogh's deep interest in *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints is apparent in the asymmetrical arrangement of the image, including the dominant horizontal branch of flowering peonies, the suppressed space, and placement of the figure off-centre with a low diagonal axis to the background.

The twenty-year-old Italian *couturier* Marianna Mattiocco, whom Russell had met within a few months of arriving in Paris, is almost certainly the model for *Pivoines et tête d'une femme*. Considered by Auguste Rodin, when she modelled for him, as 'the most beautiful woman in France',²⁵ Mattiocco eventually became Russell's wife.²⁶ Fluent in French (Russell, too, was a natural linguist) and a self-assured woman, Marianna brought to their marriage strong emotional support that sustained their family life on Belle-Île over the next twenty years. As the 'significant other',

²³ Letters dated 18 and 26 September 1886, Claude Monet to Alice Hoschedé, quoted in Ursula Prunster, pp. 25 and 26. Here, Monet writes only of their outings together and his dining with the Russell's. All Monet letters posted from Belle-Île in 1886 are published in Daniel Wildenstein, *Claude Monet: Biographie et Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 11, 1882–1886 (Lausanne: La Bibliothèque des Arts), 1979.

²⁴ Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

²⁵ Albert E. Elsen, *Rodin's Art: The Rodin Collection, Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2003, p. 463.

²⁶ Russell and Mattiocco married in Paris on 8 February 1888.

Mattiocco fulfilled a similar role to Jeanne Morel in her relationship with Rupert Bunny. Both were women of European descent, both were models; and through their encouragement and support both clearly facilitated their respective spouse's assimilation into French culture. The portrait bust for which Mattiocco sat, *Buste de Madame Russell* 1888–89,²⁷ was probably a wedding gift from Russell. Mattiocco's Italian ancestry and what to Rodin may have seemed her classical beauty inspired him to continue making numerous busts of her during the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Russell's friendship with Rodin was warm, personal and enduring, beginning in 1888 and lasting until the sculptor's death in 1917. After Russell's move to Belle-Île, he continued to correspond with Rodin and see him during his visits to Paris.²⁸ The admiration Rodin felt for the artist is borne out in his visit to the island in 1902, in the works by the painter he acquired for his own art collection, and in the several gifts of his sculptures that he made to Russell.²⁹

The four years that Russell spent in Paris should be seen as an important precursory period of familiarisation and adaptation to French life after his Anglo-Australian experiences in Sydney and London. His privileged circumstances enabled him to live comfortably and to form exceptional friendships with some of the most significant artists of his time. In fact, no other Australian artist developed such extraordinary connections abroad: first with Seurat, then with van Gogh, Monet, Rodin and later Matisse, all within the space of a few years. These connections deepened Russell's commitment to France as 'home', and his marriage to Mattiocco intensified this allegiance. Having recently purchased acreage atop a cliff overlooking the bay of Goulphar on the western seaboard of Belle-Île, 'the finest coast I've ever seen',³⁰ by 1888 Russell was ready to 'jump out of Paris as soon as possible'³¹ and settle on the island.

In a letter of late May 1888 to his brother Theo, van Gogh wrote, 'I think Russell is getting a reputation among those who are instinctively afraid of Paris. It is difficult to

²⁷ Collection of the Musée de Morlaix, Brittany.

²⁸ I accessed and read this correspondence at the Archive du Musée Rodin, Paris on 11 February 2014.

²⁹ These included a unique bronze casting of *Madame Marianna Russell* c. 1888–89 in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

³⁰ Letter dated 5 October 1887, John Russell to Tom Roberts, op. cit.

³¹ Ibid.

explain what I mean by that. Russell is such a good fellow, but you know that one can't order or force people to like Paris'.³² The exhilaration of Russell's previous two summers on Belle-Île and a six-month painting trip to Italy³³ doubtless prompted the restlessness that van Gogh sensed in his friend. Aged thirty and with a predilection for an outdoor lifestyle that included sailing as well as painting *en plein-air*, Russell's focus shifted to Brittany and to the challenging motifs of coastline and sea, *le paysage maritime* that had so inspired Monet and now energised him.

Locating a Sense of Being and Place

Russell arrived on Belle-Île in the summer of 1888. The island then housed around 10,000 residents and enjoyed a strong fishing and agricultural economy. Separated from the Quiberon peninsula by a fourteen-kilometre stretch of water, Belle-Île like the rest of Brittany remained irredeemably distant to people from outside the region. The site of constant migration and invasions including Roman occupation, the relocation of Celtic people from Great Britain in the fourth century and Danish Viking incursions, Brittany had a long involvement with cultural difference and conflict before its eventual unification with France in 1532.

In the nineteenth century the province acquired a reputation for timeless autarky, with its own distinct socio-cultural, linguistic and historical heritage.³⁴ A new sense of Breton identity emerged with the rise of a fervent nationalism that frequently saw the region through a lens of romanticism and primitivism. Its reputation as a mythical, primeval and an uncivilised place was heightened through French discourse and especially by guidebook literature of the period.³⁵ For Russell there

³² Undated letter (late May 1888), Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, quoted in *V. W. van Gogh*, vol. 2, 1959, p. 586.

³³ Russell and Mattiocco visited Italy from late 1886 to early 1887, but the trip ended in sadness when their infant son Paolo died in Sicily.

³⁴ The language related closely to the Cornish and more distantly to the Welsh dialects of Great Britain. Belle-Île, like much of western Brittany, was Breton-speaking during Russell's time on the island.

³⁵ In their writings on Post-Impressionism British art historians Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock argue that Brittany was in fact a more diverse, prosperous and complex society than that then popularised in French literature and art. Countering Paul Gauguin and other Pont-Aven School representations of the province in the late 1880s and early 1890s as savage and primitive, Orton and Pollock see Brittany as a developing and an industrious society, albeit one with a strong sense of local cultural specificity. See Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock. 'Les données Bretonnantes: La prairie de représentation', in *Art History* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell on behalf of the Association of Art Historians) vol. 3, no. 3, 1980, pp. 314–44.

were two Brittanys, the picturesque and the ‘primitive’. The former embodied a vibrant romanticised vision, which Rupert Bunny expanded in his major ‘Brittany idylls’ allegories of the early 1890s, encompassing a form of emblematic figuration to evoke atmospheric coastlines filled with mythical pagan merpeople. The latter personified Russell’s visceral image of an untamed landscape, the motivating force for the *La Côte Sauvage* paintings.

Bunny was a visitor to Brittany – one of the many painters who flocked there in the 1880s and 1890s – and his sensitivity to it was sustained by his imagination and romanticisation, giving rise to poetic evocations of otherworldly existence, Russell, in contrast, was a resident who observed and sensed the remote coastline as a temporal rather than a psychological state, a state of being rather than a nostalgic vision of a classical past. For Bunny, Brittany was an Arcadia, an imaginary place associated with peace and harmony – a dream-shaped space. Belle-Île’s rugged natural beauty offered Russell a country life of Arcadian contentment, but its landscape and sea, subject to the moods and vagaries of nature, fuelled his imagination and feelings and challenged him artistically. Russell developed an intimate relationship with the island and its natural features, and his expressive and energetic paintings capture the physical experience of his connection.

In relocating from Paris to Belle-Île, Russell followed in the path of a number of nineteenth-century French artists and writers who had visited the island. They included the painters Octave Penguilly l’Harridon, Louis Leroy and Félix Roy in the 1850s, Félix Benoist in the 1860s, and Monet in the 1880s. It was extolled by influential writers such as Gustave Flaubert, Maxime du Camp and Charles Baudelaire, who refers to ‘the intense azure of the sky and the water’ and the sense of the uncanny, as though the regions of rock ‘make a portal open onto infinity... a cloud, a multitude, an avalanche, a *wound* of white birds’.³⁶

Russell settled at Port Goulphar, a small rocky inlet sheltered from the broad expanse of the Atlantic Ocean by rugged headlands on the western side of the island. Possibly his historic witnessing in 1886 of Monet’s Belle-Île series in the making played a

³⁶ Steven Z. Levine, *Monet, Narcissus and Self-Reflection: The Modernist Myth of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1995, p. 62.

role in his choice of location. Perhaps, too, the remoteness and physicality of the setting, with its striking rock and cliff formations and relentlessly pounding sea, invigorated his masculinity and countenanced a somatic connection. Conceivably, too, an imaginal correlation linking the craggy inlet with the coves and bays of Sydney Harbour, the landscape of the artist's childhood and adolescent years, elicited in him a connectedness or sense of place.³⁷ All of these possibilities were probable underlying factors in Russell's exceptional choice of Port-Goulphar as 'home'. Other place options such as the then popular artists' destinations of the French Riviera and the Quimperlé coast in western Brittany³⁸ were certainly more fashionable and accessible than La Côte Sauvage but, like most small islands, Belle-Île offered Russell a distinct quality of life – relative seclusion, quietness, a sense of community and also of belonging, which he clearly found compelling. Above all, the island's dramatic landscape provided him with a spectacular motif for painting.



Image 17 John Russell's house and studio overlooking Port Goulphar, c. 1900

Construction started on Russell's house, perched dramatically on a towering precipice, in the late autumn of 1887. With the help of local labour, it was completed by the spring of 1888. On a visit in 1902 Rodin found the location terrifying: 'Your little eagle's

nest in such appalling surrounds frightens me still'.³⁹ Russell's home was not the typical workaday Breton dwelling. An extant photograph of the property, known locally as 'Le Château d'Anglais' (the Englishman's castle), reveals a complex of some magnitude.⁴⁰ The rambling two-storey house incorporated a long frontage, with

³⁷ I toured La Côte Sauvage from 15–16 February 2014 and was struck by the remarkable physical similarities, though on a far more condensed scale, between Port Goulphar and Sydney Harbour.

³⁸ This section of the Brittany coastline included three of France's most popular late nineteenth-century artists' colonies – Concarneau, Pont-Aven and Le Pouldu.

³⁹ Ann Galbally, p. 239.

⁴⁰ A photograph of the Russell property appears in *Maisons Côte Ouest* (Boulogne-Billancourt), July/August, 2000, n. p.

large bay windows and verandas taking full advantage of the superb view across the inlet to the ocean beyond.⁴¹ It provided generous living space for the six Russell children as well as the Bellilois domestic staff, including maidservants and a governess.⁴² A large central studio around which the life of the household revolved, and a workshop and stables, completed the complex.⁴³ During Marianna and John Russell's occupancy, 'Le Château d'Anglais' must have been one of the most well-appointed and lavish homesteads on La Côte Sauvage, an indication of the Russells' wealth and desire to live comfortably, perhaps a lifestyle resembling that of the urban bourgeoisie in distant Paris. Even today, some fifty years after its demolition, the local inhabitants fondly remember the former home and also 'Monsieur Russell, l'Australien'.⁴⁴

Port Goulphar connected Russell to place, to what Martin Heidegger refers to in *Being and Time* as a topological space of 'primal happening'.⁴⁵ Just as Sydney undoubtedly informed Russell's early identity and sense of belonging, so 'Le Château d'Anglais' and its oceanic surrounds fostered his sense of connectedness and deep-rootedness to Belle-Île. In his 1959 treatise 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', part of the collection of essays *Poetry, Language, Thought*,⁴⁶ Heidegger discusses the notion of dwelling, contending that 'to build is already to dwell'.⁴⁷ He then proceeds to argue that the way in which we dwell is also the manner in which we exist in the world, an extension of our identity, of who we are. Thus for Heidegger 'building as dwelling' was not just a functional need but also a purposeful symbol of self and community. *Dasein* ('being' or 'being-in-the-world') for Heidegger was a way of being continuously involved with the immediate world, while always remaining aware of the contingent element of that involvement, of the 'priority of the world to

⁴¹ A description of the layout of the house is given by Donald J. Finley, 'John Peter Russell (1858–1930): Australia's link with French Impressionism', in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (London), December 1966, pp. 18–36.

⁴² The Russell's domestic staff is mentioned in 'Matisse on Belle-Île', in *The Burlington Magazine* (London), October 1995, p. 666.

⁴³ 'Le Château d'Anglais' was demolished in the early 1960s and the Castel Clara Hotel now occupies the site.

⁴⁴ I discovered this when searching for 'Le Château d'Anglais' during my visit to Belle-Île in February 2014. In Bangor, the closest village to the former property, there is a street named after Russell, rue John Peter Russell, which connects with rue Claude Monet.

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit., p. 221.

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1959), translated as *Poetry, Language, Thought* by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row), 1971.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 146.

the self and of the evolving nature of the self itself'.⁴⁸ In Heidegger's view, the concepts of 'being' and 'place' were inextricably linked. Place was not merely a location, but a 'happening', a taking place and an openness and a situatedness of being.

In a sense 'being' became the intuitive process by which Russell connected with the landscape (and community) of Belle-Île. Russell's building of 'Le Château d'Anglais' asserted his link to place, involving a joint sense of community, of at-homeness and continuity and, by extension, of existence – his way of 'being' in the world. For Russell, the large house positioned spectacularly on the rocky coastline of La Côte Sauvage fostered a sense of authentic belonging, of assimilation, shaping how he interacted with his adopted culture and the landscape, the essential stimulus for his creativity. The awe-inspiring beauty of La Côte Sauvage became the source and recurring motif for his art. It sustained both his art and also his 'being', of which the resultant paintings are the elemental expression, as expounded further in the following section.

Imaging Belle-Île's La Côte Sauvage

Once settled at Port Goulphar, Russell set about the task of developing a critical art practice based on the aesthetic possibilities of Impressionism, which his encounter with Monet strengthened. Incorporating a similar technique of strong colour and broken brushwork, his work bears a resemblance to Monet's paintings of Belle-Île's windswept coastline of 1886-87. Like this pivotal figure of Impressionism, Russell, too, was deeply concerned with capturing the strength and vigour of La Côte Sauvage, and also over an expanded period and intensified by his deep-seated connection, a strong expression of assimilation into his adopted home. Spectacularly shaped over time by the powerful action of the Atlantic's relentless stormy sea, this particular coastline offered him limitless and inspiring subject matter to meet this objective, resulting in a compelling body of work encapsulating his emotive relationship with this unique landscape. Few artists captured its beauty and intensity in such a sustained and disciplined way; La Côte Sauvage was Russell's version of

⁴⁸ Joseph Childers and Gary Hentz (eds), *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1995, p. 70.

Monet's garden at Giverny.

Ursula Prunster's 2001 exhibition, 'Belle-Île: Monet, Russell and Matisse in Brittany',⁴⁹ explored the work of the most important artists to have painted on the island. Thirty-five works by Russell were exhibited, including seven key paintings which are among his finest. These images, together with one other, form the basis of my analysis of his *La Côte Sauvage* series. Created between c. 1890 and 1905, this group of eight works forcefully expresses the artist's visceral encounter with 'the wild coast', 'a topological space of "primal happening"', to quote Martin Heidegger, and a visual metaphor for his 'being' as an acknowledged French-Australian. The six oils and two watercolours are as follows:

- *La voile rouge, Port de Goulphar (The red sail, Port Goulphar)* c. 1890, oil on canvas, 66 x 81.5cm, Musée de Morlaix, Brittany
- *Bateaux de pêche, Port de Goulphar (Fishing boats, Port Goulphar)* c. 1896–1908,⁵⁰ watercolour, coloured chalks and graphite, sheet 47 x 60cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- *Aiguilles de Port-Coton, Belle-Île, (Port Coton Needles, Belle-Île)* c. 1900, oil on canvas, 61 x 51cm, Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth
- *Mer agitée, Belle-Île (Rough sea, Belle-Île)* 1900, oil on canvas, 63 x 63cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne;
- *Pointe de Morestil (Morestil Point)* c. 1900, oil on canvas, 64 x 81.5cm, John and Julie Schaeffer Collection, Sydney
- *La Pointe de Morestil par mer calme (Calm sea at Morestil Point)* 1901, oil on canvas, 61 x 95cm, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- *Roc Toul (Roche Guibel) (Toul Rock (Guibel Rock))* 1904–05, oil on canvas, 98.5 x 128cm, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- *Tempête, Belle-Île (Storm, Belle-Île)* 1905, pencil, watercolour and gouache,

⁴⁹ The exhibition was shown at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 24 November 2001 – 3 February 2002 and then toured to the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane 14 February – 21 April 2002. A 136-page illustrated catalogue, with essays by Ursula Prunster, Ann Galbally, Albie Thoms and Paula Dredge, accompanied the show.

⁵⁰ This is my given title. The work is listed as *Untitled (Goulphar creek)*, in the National Gallery of Australia's online catalogue of the collection. There is no creek at Port Goulphar; the scene is the same as that of fishing boats depicted in *La voile rouge, Port de Goulphar*.

sheet 25.5 x 32.5cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.⁵¹

From his studio high on the cliffs overlooking Port Goulphar, Russell glimpsed daily the spectacle of the endless movement and colour of the boats on the bay below, the subject of *La voile rouge, Port de Goulphar (The red sail, Port Goulphar)* c. 1890 and *Bateaux de pêche, Port de Goulphar (Fishing boats, Port Goulphar)* c. 1896–1908. Russell's time on La Côte Sauvage coincided with the heyday of Belle-Île's fishing industry, and Port Goulphar was often used as a safe anchorage for the boats trawling the coast. The slipway on the shoreline adjoining 'Le Château d'Anglais' remained for Russell a tangible and symbolic link with the sea. A keen yachtsman, he built there at least two boats, a ketch and a cutter, including a vessel named *Waratah*, evoking his Australian links.⁵²

Maritime pursuits and boating as a form of leisure became fashionable at around 1830 in France and by mid century was a common pastime, particularly in the Île-de-France region. Linked to Paris by train, western villages along the Seine became popular places for recreational and competitive sailing, and on Sundays crowds of people came to stroll by the river and to watch the races. Argenteuil, where the Seine widened out into a basin and provided the broadest stretch of water in the Paris region, became a favoured destination for city dwellers seeking waterside entertainment. Monet's *Régates à Argenteuil* c. 1872,⁵³ one of eighty or so canvases painted during the period he lived and worked in the village, and Manet's *Boating* 1874,⁵⁴ painted not far from Argenteuil and the manifesto of his new allegiance to Impressionism, celebrate the urban middle class enjoying the pleasures of the Seine. Russell, too, sailed and painted in this area in the mid 1880s and produced similarly engaging scenes, maintaining the long tradition of marine painting in western art, which Impressionism modernised and popularised.

⁵¹ My selection purposely excludes compositions incorporating the figure, which tend to be more rigid and less imaginative than Russell's pure landscapes. It seems to me Russell consistently found it difficult to orchestrate pictorially the relationship between the figure and landscape.

⁵² Donald J. Finley, op. cit.

⁵³ Collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

⁵⁴ Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Image 18 John Russell *La voile rouge, Port de Goulphar* (*The red sail, Port Goulphar*) c. 1890
Oil on canvas, 65 x 80 cm

In *La voile rouge* and *Bateaux de pêche* the pervasive rugged terrain of Port Goulphar maintains a compelling presence, almost dwarfing the vessels at anchor. The former work presents the spectacle from the shoreline, whereas the latter renders a panoramic view painted from high up on the cliffs. *La voile rouge* is vibrant in colouring

compared with the more low-key and muted *Bateaux de pêche*. The latter has a delicacy, especially prominent in the fore- and mid-grounds of the composition where the interplay of unevenly applied chalk marks with the soft watercolour undersurface creates a lively textural effect. *La voile rouge*'s rich palette of deep red, orange and purple pigments contrasts strongly with the soft tonalism of *Bateaux de pêche*. In a prescient letter of 1887 to Tom Roberts, Russell wrote, 'When we get to colour ... Yellow and purple, orange boat sails, blue sea, red rocks, green sea. All a matter of feeling. T'is in the man with the brush & paint pot or it is not'.⁵⁵

The feeling of which Russell writes was his emotional connection to Belle-Île expressed through different colour harmonies in his paintings. As a colourist Russell was cognisant of colour meaning in his work. We know from Matisse, looking back on the change in his painting technique between 1896 and 1897, that Russell had knowledge of Edmond Duranty's colour theory relating to Impressionism.⁵⁶ With the contemporary ideas of colour theorists such as Michel Chevreul and Ogden Rood⁵⁷ then being debated among artists, it is likely he followed new discoveries in colour

⁵⁵ Letter dated 5 October 1887, John Russell to Tom Roberts, op. cit.

⁵⁶ An art critic, Duranty in 1876 wrote a pamphlet called *The New Painting: Concerning the Group of Artists Exhibiting at the Durand-Ruel Galleries*, where he discussed the use of colour in paintings exhibited by the Impressionists in their second group show. See Paula Dredge, 'Paint, brush & canvas', in Ursula Prunster, *Belle-Île: Monet, Russell & Matisse in Brittany* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales), 2001, p. 67.

⁵⁷ The scientific theories of colour optics and light of Chevreul and Ogden encouraged a departure from the tenets of Impressionism and had an important impact on the Divisionists' belief they were achieving the maximum luminosity scientifically possible in their paintings.

perception with great interest. Based on his understanding of these ideas, it is interesting to speculate on Russell's colour selection for *La voile rouge* and *Bateaux de pêche* (and for the other six works being examined) as a marker of his approach to colour meaning and its emotional resonances in relation to his connection to place, and thus to his assimilation into the host culture. The Chinese vermilion of the boat sails denotes energy, strength and passion; the orange of the headland combines the energy of red and the serenity of yellow; and the blue of the sea evokes mystery and relationship.

It could be argued then that with these undertones of optimism and confidence, Russell's choice and consistent use of this colour range throughout the *La Côte Sauvage* series reflect an artist deeply in harmony with place. My reading differs from Ann Galbally's understanding of Russell's position. She writes, 'He shows little interest in the interaction of colours or in their possible emotional or psychological appeal. Overwhelmingly his aim is to use colour in his work ... as part of a drive towards the primitive and the pure'.⁵⁸ Certainly purity of colour was a key painterly objective for Russell, but he undoubtedly employed it also for emotional effect, as a means of expressing his inner feelings and symbiotic relationship with La

Côte Sauvage.

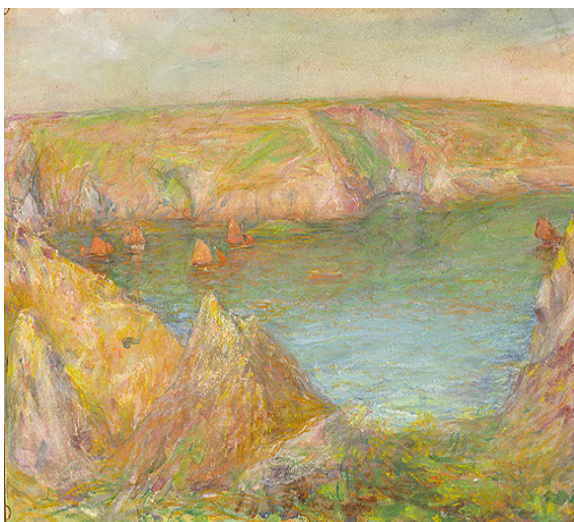


Image 19 John Russell *Bateaux de pêche, Port de Goulphar* (Fishing boats, Port Goulphar) c. 1896-1908
Watercolour, coloured chalks and graphite,
sheet 47 x 60 cm

We know from a letter Russell wrote in the winter of 1890 or 1891, again to Tom Roberts that he was currently experimenting with grinding his own pigments to achieve pure colour in preference to using commercially produced paints.⁵⁹ Australian paintings conservator Paula Dredge has studied Russell's palette. She lists 'cobalt blue, viridian green, pale

⁵⁸ Ann Galbally, p. 70.

⁵⁹ Letter of winter 1890-91, John Russell to Tom Roberts, quoted in Paula Dredge, 'Paint, brush & canvas', in Ursula Prunster, p. 64.

cadmium yellow, Chinese vermilion red, *garance foncé* [red madder] and white' as his pigments of choice. Three additional colours, 'emerald green, French ultramarine blue and deep cadmium yellow', were occasionally used. According to Dredge, apart from the substitution of chrome yellow for light cadmium yellow, this was identical to the choice of pigments used by Monet at Belle-Île.⁶⁰ Russell's limited palette of six basic colours, with a predilection in his *La Côte Sauvage* paintings for cobalt blue combined with *garance foncé*, clearly reveals an artist searching for pure intense colour to achieve a vibrant and forceful effect, not unlike that of Monet. A partially broken brushwork technique added an expressive rhythm, all of which were Impressionism's legacy.



Image 20 John Russell *Aiguilles de Port-Coton, Belle-Île* (Port Coton Needles, Belle-Île) c. 1900
Oil on canvas, 61 x 50.5 cm

Aiguilles de Port-Coton, Belle-Île, (Port Coton Needles, Belle-Île) c. 1900 takes this liveliness of paint handling further in an energetic arrangement of spontaneous brushwork and luminous colour. Located only a short distance from Port Goulphar, the Port Coton Needles are Belle-Île's most imposing landmark. Incessantly exposed to the strong winds and waves that sweep from the Atlantic Ocean onto La Côte Sauvage, the Needles form a spectacular and majestic testament to nature's enduring and inexorable power. Their name comes from the foam projected by the

waves at the foot of the rocks in heavy seas, which has been likened to cotton voile. These massive rock structures have inspired various artists, most notably Monet in 1886, when he produced six closely related paintings of the outcrop seen from high on the adjacent cliffs. It is the largest series of the thirty-eight works he painted on Belle-Île.

The grandeur and resilience of the Port Coton Needles were also an inspirational focus for Russell. Like Monet he painted them under different atmospheric

⁶⁰ Paula Dredge, p. 63.

conditions and in various compositional arrangements. We know from signed and dated extant works that Russell first painted the Needles in 1886–87 and that the motif remained a potent force as late as 1910, by which time he was based in Paris.⁶¹ The fact that he painted this imposing site many times, especially during the 1890s, is perhaps indicative of the strong attachment and emotion he felt for it. In a sense, the Needles became a recurring expression of his familiarity with and fascination for this unique part of La Côte Sauvage, in much the same way and around the same time that Mont Sainte-Victoire in southern France became a constant subject for Paul Cézanne between 1882 and 1906.⁶²



Image 21 John Russell *Mer agitée, Belle-Île* (*Rough sea, Belle-Île*) 1900
Oil on canvas, 63 x 63 cm

In accentuating the highest needle in the trio, Russell imparted to *Aiguilles de Port-Coton* a distinct presence that seems almost to assume a human aura. A resolute patriarch, unusually tall, with an athletic physique amplified by a strong personality, Russell too was of imposing stature. In making the central needle the focus of the composition, Russell could be seen to be conveying something of his own physical robustness and masculinity. Might not the dominant pyramid-shaped formation be

seen as a painterly personification of the artist's authority and self-possession? Indeed, all eight paintings of La Côte Sauvage possess a strong masculine sensibility, and of the four male artists in this study, Russell's art is undoubtedly the most masculine. Certainly it stands in marked contrast to Bunny's 'feminine Arcady', focusing on strong independent women relishing in the sophistication of Paris, comfortable in their own skin and undaunted by their beauty and sensuality. The soft luxurious fabrics that drape against the curves of the body of Bunny's women here are laid bare to expose the starkness of the Needles, a cogent symbol of Belle-Île's

⁶¹ The earliest dated painting is *Les aiguilles, Belle-Île* (*The Needles, Belle-Île*) 1886–87, oil on canvas in the John and Julie Schaeffer Collection, Sydney. The last, *Les aiguilles de Coton, Belle-Île* (*The Coton Needles, Belle-Île*) 1910, pencil, watercolour and gouache, is in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁶² John Rewald (ed.), *Paul Cézanne, Letters* (Paris: Bernard Grasset), 1978, p. 165.

simplicity and harshness – a very different experience from Bunny’s refined modern world.

Some might find my claim about Russell’s masculinity a rather dubious psychologism, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Extant photographs of the artist like that reproduced on page 73 and others examined by me at the Archive du Musée Rodin in Paris⁶³ indicate a robust and rugged figure, strong-featured with an outgoing and effusive nature. Russell’s choice of Port Goulphur, a harsh and rocky coastline overlooking a wild and stormy sea, as ‘home’ for two decades and his vigorous outdoor engagement with this landscape, on foot and also through boating and painting, also suggest a strong and resilient individual.

Russell’s increasing emphasis on spontaneity as the subjective trace of temperament in his work (alluded to in *Aiguilles de Port-Coton*) and the idea that painting went beyond mere representation, underpinned the complex duality of image making in the late nineteenth-century.⁶⁴ In *Mer agitée, Belle-Île (Rough sea, Belle-Île)* 1900 and *Tempête, Belle-Île (Storm, Belle-Île)* 1905, Russell took this subjectivity to an entirely new level. He frequently sailed along the western coastline of the island, directly experiencing its storms. Russell’s artistic response, a restless expression of the experience, is palpable in both works.

In *Mer agitée* Russell evoked a sense of explosive energy. The turbulent sea, sky and rocks fuse in the kind of swirling vortex composition we associate, for example, with J. M. W. Turner’s late (1840s) paintings of storms. The English romanticist was greatly admired by many late nineteenth-century French artists, and a number of Impressionists, including Monet and Pissarro, acknowledged his importance as a vital touchstone at various points in their careers. During his early years in London, Russell too was moved by the fusion of dramatic light and colour he observed in Turner’s work. In *Mer agitée*, the painterly effect is strongly expressive and approaches the tensed energy of Turner’s example. Russell’s method incorporates strong hues – cobalt blue, green and madder red, interspersed with white – dynamically applied with both brush and palette knife, presenting an abstracted all-

⁶³ John Russell file, RUS-5518, Archive du Musée Rodin, Paris, accessed 11 February 2014.

⁶⁴ This approach had its genesis in earlier Impressionist principles.

over texture and intensity. Painted some fifteen years later, *Tempête, Belle-Île* achieves a similar dramatic impact in which Russell depicts a wild coastal storm in watercolour and gouache. A landform barely materialises in the left of the composition; the essence of the subject is the atmospheric effect, awe-inspiring and transcendent, as Russell lays bare his whole ‘being’ in an imagistic experience.



**Image 22 John Russell *Tempête, Belle-Île*
(*Storm, Belle-Île*) 1905
Watercolour and gouache, sheet 25.5 x 32.5 cm**

In their evocative, near minimalist style *Mer agitée* and *Tempête, Belle-Île* approach the poetic principles of French writer Stéphane Mallarmé, whose ideas were then central to the understanding of modernist painting. He explained his aesthetic in a contemporary interview:

I think ... that there should be only allusion. The contemplation of objects, the image emanating from the dreams which the objects excite, this is poetry ... To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which is created by the gradual pleasure of apprehending it. To suggest it, that is the dream.⁶⁵

Mallarmé’s insightfulness reminds us that although nothing lies beyond reality, within this nothingness reside the essences of the imaginary. Russell’s ability to perceive and crystallise these ‘essences’, to transpose the everyday experiences of his connectedness to ‘place’ into poetic form, individualised and enriched his Belle-Île oeuvre. Nowhere is this more evident than in the abstracted and emotive *Mer agitée, Belle-Île* and *Tempête, Belle-Île*.

In painting *La Pointe de Morestil par mer calme* (*Calm sea at Morestil Point*) 1901, a headland that stood within easy reach of Port Goulphar, Russell followed in Monet’s footsteps although some fifteen years after the eminent Frenchman portrayed it in *Grotte de Port-Domois* (*Cave at Port Domois*) 1886.⁶⁶ The paintings

⁶⁵ Jules Huret, *Enquête sur L’Évolution Littéraire* (*Survey of Literary Evolution*) (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier), 1891, p. 60.

⁶⁶ Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Ibaraki, Japan.

bear a striking resemblance, especially in their compositional arrangement, high-key colouring and vigorous brushwork. In all likelihood Russell had seen and been inspired by Monet's picture when it was exhibited at Galerie Georges Petit in 1887.⁶⁷ It is one of five canvases Monet produced of the Port Domois islands during his painting trip to Belle-Île. He later wrote to fellow painter and art patron Gustave Caillebotte:

I am in a wonderfully wild region, with terrifying rocks and a sea of unbelievable colours. I am truly thrilled, even though it is difficult because I had got used to painting the Channel [Monet had been painting marine subjects on the coast of the English Channel since 1867], and I knew how to go about it, but the Atlantic Ocean is quite different.⁶⁸

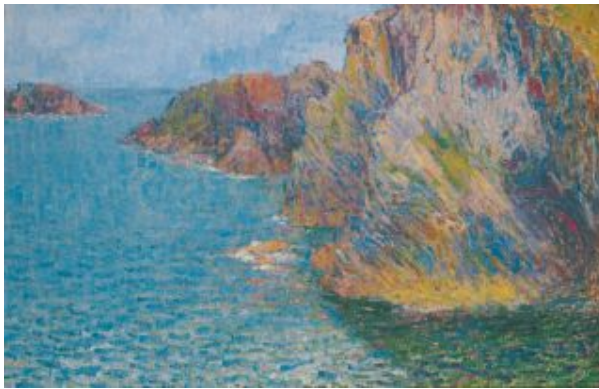


Image 23 John Russell *La Pointe de Morestil par mer calme* (Calm sea at Morestil Point) 1901
Oil on canvas, 61 x 95 cm

Both works were painted from the same cliff top overlooking Port Domois. In each, the rock formations are arranged diagonally on the canvas to create a feeling of space. In the style of Japanese prints, then a prominent trend, the horizon is placed at the top of the paintings leaving little room for sky. In both

compositions the pictorial emphasis is on the encounter between the rugged coast and vibrant sea. Monet resolved this through a synthesis of intense colours (blues, greens and oranges) with strident multi-directional brushstrokes, which are like circumflex accents, dynamic but controlled. In the painting by Russell there is a visual tension between the vigorous demands of the rock forms and the equally forceful but contrasting accents of the shimmering sea, the former comprising strong diagonal strokes of colour and the latter composed of more evenly brushed horizontal

⁶⁷ The work was shown in the 'Sixth Exposition Internationale de Peinture et de Sculpture', Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, May–June 1887.

⁶⁸ Undated letter from Monet to Gustave Caillebotte, quoted in the *Catalogue of Works*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Claude Monet, *Les rochers de Belle-Île, La Côte Sauvage* 1886, www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/home.html, accessed 24 March 2014.

strokes. The imposing presence of the jagged promontory is not unlike that of the highest needle in *Aiguilles de Port-Coton, Belle-Île*. There is the sense that here, too, Russell has imprinted his own masculine identity on the landscape through his vigorous treatment of colour and shape, figuratively casting the headland in the form of his own ‘being’.



Image 24 Claude Monet *Grotte de Port-Domois*
(*Cave at Port Domois*) 1886
Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm

In capturing the atmospheric effect of the power of the eternal motion of the sea pounding against the coastline, *Pointe de Morestil (Morestil Point)* c. 1900 has a dynamic resonance reminiscent of *Mer agitée* and *Tempête, Belle-Île*. Russell worked rapidly to catch the surge of the wave’s movement forward in the instant it broke on the shoreline; with brisk brushwork

he completed the effect. The limited palette of blue and brown hues, intensified by the frenzied daubs and streaks of white, encapsulates the muted glow of a winter tempest. Russell loved the light on Belle-Île, especially in the winter when the weather is most extreme; he wrote to Rodin, ‘For painting I prefer winter best, it’s a very beautiful time, the colours are a dream, but the effects change so quickly’.⁶⁹ His broad knowledge of the various moods of nature, the result of his sustained engagement with the elements in all seasons, is brilliantly shown in his depiction of the foamy maelstrom.

Russell’s pictorial conception of La Côte Sauvage, once established, did not greatly change. For him, unlike Monet, Belle-Île was not an evolutionary phase in his artistic development, to be dealt with and then largely abandoned. Rather, Russell saw it as part of an extended journey, all-embracing and long lasting. His subject was immediately accessible and available for painting at any time, and he had the

⁶⁹ Letter dated 29 November 1893, John Russell to Auguste Rodin, John Russell file, Archive du Musée Rodin, Paris, accessed 11 February 2014.

advantage of being able to carry his canvases directly home to his studio where, if unconvinced of their resolution *en plein-air*, he could work on them. Thus Russell did not have the same urgency that drove Monet to work rapidly in all weather.



**Image 25 John Russell *Roc Toul (Roche Guibel)*
(*Toul Rock (Guibel Rock)*) 1904-05
Oil on canvas, 98.5 x 128 cm**

Roc Toul (Roche Guibel) (*Toul Rock (Guibel Rock)*) 1904-05 is one of Russell's largest paintings from the *La Côte Sauvage* series and clearly a studio-completed work.⁷⁰ It embodies the best of the artist's strengths as a painter, including his fondness for structured colour. The surface is like a tapestry woven of separate flecks of colour – cobalt blues,

emerald greens, soft yellows and touches of red madder – interlaced through the rocks as well as the water. From a distance it vibrates with energy and light. Ann Galbally writes of the painting, 'There is little doubt that colour is the real subject of the work ... He ... has left well behind his earlier obsession with form ... For him, as for Monet, the subject had become but the excuse for a display of sensuous colour harmony'.⁷¹ However, it is the rich synthesis of colour and form, structured in innumerable divided brushstrokes that invigorates *Roc Toul*. This directness and intensity of approach reveals a sense of self-actualisation in the image, a feeling of Russell's exhilaration of 'being' in the landscape and sharing the experience with us. Here we have the first intimation that Russell was looking beyond the naturalistic impulses of Impressionism towards a more expressive and dynamic use of colour. In his final two years on Belle-Île Russell would take this further, experimenting with Neo-Impressionist and Fauve-inspired methods to achieve an intense luminosity previously unparalleled in his art.

⁷⁰ Russell generally adopted the *plein-air* practice of working with portable-size canvases. *Roc Toul*, however, measures 98.5 x 128cm and was almost certainly too large to be painted outdoors in the frequently harsh climate of Belle-Île.

⁷¹ Ann Galbally, 'L'Allure de la Côte Sauvage: John Peter Russell, *Roc Toul*', in Lynne Seear & Julie Ewington (eds), *Brought to Light: Australian Art, 1850-1965* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery), 1998, p. 97.

‘Place’ as a Post-Impressionist Proposition

Russell and Paul Signac met in 1886, when Signac and Georges Seurat were just developing the technique of Divisionism. While Russell initially dismissed them as ‘darned fools’ dotting canvas in a myriad of pure colours, by the early 1900s he had begun to systemise his painting method in terms of broken colour vibrantly applied to the canvas. This formulation was already evident in *Roc Toul*, but within a few years through a concentrated application of complementary colours applied adjacent to one another, Russell had achieved a luminous overall hue evocative of Divisionism’s optical-blending effect.

Cultural historians and theorists have invariably regarded Russell as an established Impressionist. In the 2013 exhibition ‘Australian Impressionists in France’, for the first time the artist’s debt to Neo-Impressionism was acknowledged.⁷² The exhibition included twenty-six works by Russell, the curator Elena Taylor contextualising a small number, mostly dating from 1907 on, in relation to ‘the possibilities of the Divisionist technique to achieve intense and brilliant colour’.⁷³ This new approach generally corresponds with the years in which Russell exhibited with the Société des Artistes Indépendants, a champion of modernism and the leading Neo-Impressionist forum with Signac as its leader. In 1906 Russell showed eight paintings (including *Mer agitée, Belle-Île*); five paintings (including *La voile rouge* and *Roc Toul*) in 1907; three paintings and three watercolours in 1908; and two paintings in 1909.⁷⁴ In 1908 and 1909 Russell also showed with London’s Allied Artists’ Association, a modernist group modelled on the Salon des Indépendants.⁷⁵

This sequence of exhibitions was the most sustained showing of Russell’s work and only came to a close following the death of Marianna Russell and his subsequent departure from Belle-Île. While it is not known what prompted Russell to begin

⁷² ‘Australian Impressionists in France’ was held at The Ian Potter Centre, NGV Australia at Federation Square, Melbourne, 15 June–6 October 2013.

⁷³ Elena Taylor, *Australian Impressionists in France* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria), 2013, p. 140.

⁷⁴ Dominique Lobstein, *Dictionnaire des Indépendants 1884–1914*, vol. 11 (Dijon; L’Échelle de Jacob), 2003.

⁷⁵ Like the Société des Artistes Indépendants, the Allied Artists’ Association proved to be a vital resource for the exhibition of avant-garde art, particularly for the Fitzroy Street Group, an early manifestation of English Post-Impressionism formed by Walter Sickert, in London.

exhibiting after a prolonged absence, his choice of the Salon des Independants can be regarded as a deliberate strategy to re-engage with the French avant-garde. During the period that he exhibited, the Salon des Independants became the principal platform for promoting the work of the Fauves.⁷⁶ Russell had befriended its leading figure, Matisse, during his stay on Belle-Île in 1896, and their friendship was strengthened when Matisse again visited the island the following year.⁷⁷ While their association after this time is unclear, it is possible that Matisse may have influenced Russell's decision to exhibit at the Salon des Independants.⁷⁸

One of Russell's last securely dated works, *Madame Russell parmi les fleurs dans la baie au jardin de Goulphar, Belle-Île* (Mrs Russell among the flowers in the bay garden, Goulphar, Belle-Île 1907,⁷⁹ confidently embraces the Divisionist technique and style. Almost two-thirds of the painting is taken up with a sea of flowers from



Image 26 John Russell *Madame Russell parmi les fleurs dans la baie au jardin de Goulphar, Belle-Île* (Mrs Russell among the flowers in the bay of the garden of Goulphar, Belle-Île) 1907
Oil on canvas, 80.5 x 100 cm

which Marianna gracefully emerges, one hand casually resting upon the wall of the garden. Her upright figure and the houses on the distant horizon act as a counterpoint to an otherwise strongly horizontal composition. The flowers have been painted with separate small dabs of pinks, reds, yellows and whites, which form a

⁷⁶ Paul Signac was elected vice-president of the Salon des Independants in 1905 and president in 1908, while Henri Matisse served on its selection committee from 1903 and as vice-president and assistant secretary in 1905.

⁷⁷ Russell drew Matisse's attention to the Belle-Île paintings of Monet and to the techniques and colour theories of Impressionism during his three-month stay on Belle-Île in 1896. Matisse returned to the island the following year and again painted with Russell.

⁷⁸ In 1904 Russell began renting a house at Neuilly on the western outskirts of Paris, and from this point on wintered there. From 1906 Matisse established his home and studio at the Hôtel Biron (present-day Musée Rodin) in Paris, which was within easy reach of Neuilly by train.

⁷⁹ Collection of the Musée de Morlaix, Brittany.

striking pattern of radiant colour extending across the canvas, achieving an optical effect.

Marianna took a keen interest in the development of the gardens at Port Goulphar,⁸⁰ directly instructing Hippolyte Guillaume,⁸¹ who was employed to maintain them, on their care. Within a year of *Madame Russell parmi les fleurs* being painted Marianna died, struck down by cancer.⁸² The bearer of Russell's six children and a devoted wife and mother, she had provided staunch support to Russell, which sustained their artistic life together. In a letter of 4 April 1908, five days after Marianna's death, their son Cedric wrote to Rodin from Neuilly-sur-Seine: 'We are all distraught by her death because, despite the direness of the illness, it was unexpected; my father is especially in despair'.⁸³ Russell's anguish was desperately acknowledged in a conflagration of a great deal of his work shortly after, marking his departure from the island.⁸⁴

Apart from Marianna, his friend Hippolyte Guillaume and occasional fishermen, Russell rarely included figures in his paintings of La Côte Sauvage. Perhaps he saw them as an imposition on a landscape that he had come to imagine as unique to him, not part of a home-grown experience, as with the Bellilois, but adopted through his continuous painting of it as an outsider and therefore somehow distinctive and exclusive. Images of 'the wild coast' without human presence endorse Russell's distinctive relationship with it, a manifestation of an 'allusion ... emanating from the dreams ... created by the gradual pleasure of apprehending it', to quote Mallarmé. Over some twenty years Russell had built up a special connection with Port Goulphar and the wider La Côte Sauvage region, absorbing its uniqueness as an island culture into his paintings in much the same way that he assimilated with it. Late works like *Paysage aux maisons* (*Landscape with houses*) 1907,⁸⁵ perhaps one of three watercolours catalogued as *aquarelles* in the Salon des Independants

⁸⁰ Donald J. Finley, pp. 18–36.

⁸¹ Hippolyte Guillaume was the subject of several portraits by Russell and also by Monet.

⁸² Elizabeth Salter, *The Lost Impressionist: A Biography of John Peter Russell* (London: Angus and Robertson), 1976, p. 166.

⁸³ Letter dated 4 April 1908, Cedric Russell to Auguste Rodin, John Russell file, Archive du Musée Rodin, Paris, accessed 11 February 2014.

⁸⁴ Nicholas Lambourn, 'An Australian in Paris', in *Christie's International Magazine* (London: Christie's), vol. XIII, 1996, p. 33.

⁸⁵ Collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

exhibition of 1908,⁸⁶ condense Russell's exceptional vision in a few diluted washes of vibrant colour more reminiscent of Fauvist colouration. In infusing the landscape with emotional passion and so minimally in terms of subject, Russell had come full circle in his artistic journey on Belle-Île. Whereas *La voile rouge, Port de Goulphar* had earlier unlocked the mystery of the island, *Paysage aux maisons* now corroborated Russell's sense of belonging. La Côte Sauvage remained Russell's *dasein*, his connection to 'being-in-the-world'.

Russell's Achievements

Two important actions set Russell apart from most other Australian expatriate artists in the late nineteenth century. The first was his decision in 1880 to relocate to Europe, a move that subsequent generations of artists would follow. By 1900, among the case studies all but Carrick (who spent her early life in London) had followed Russell's example, and by 1914 the number of Australian artists going abroad had increased significantly. Russell's initiative heralded a new phase in Australian art, the assimilation of an Australian home-grown culture with European art, which persisted until the 1970s when our artists turned increasingly to America for international stimulus.

Russell achieved another first for Australian expatriatism by settling outside the favoured cultural centres of Paris and London, preferring instead the seclusion of Belle-Île, where his early encounter with Monet proved decisive. Absorbing the virtuoso's Impressionist technique, during the 1890s and early 1900s Russell produced works closely aligned with this movement and subsequently with Post-Impressionism. Daniel Thomas astutely observes: 'if "ways and means" meant Divisionist colour theory, autonomous non-descriptive brushwork or decorative, repetitive composition – in short Monet's example from the eighties – this is exactly what gives Russell's work strength and vigour. By comparison, the Australian open-air landscapes by Roberts and Streeton look drab, timidly illustrative and flimsy'.⁸⁷

Russell's early involvement with the Parisian avant-garde – with Monet, Signac and

⁸⁶ Dominique Lobstein, catalogue numbers 5336, 5337 and 5338.

⁸⁷ Daniel Thomas, *Outlines of Australian Art: The Joseph Brown Collection* (Melbourne: Macmillan), 1973, p. 36.

van Gogh, three giants of early modernism – signalled his future direction, leading to an unwavering commitment to modernist principles. Russell's progressiveness in embracing modern ideas and methods closely allied him with Ethel Carrick, the only other case study to explore jointly modern colour, fragmented brushwork and *plein-air* painting. Carrick settled in Paris and absorbed developments in contemporary French art from the mainstream while Russell assimilated them from the remoteness of Belle-Île. His major opus, *La Côte Sauvage*, was created in relative isolation, a significant achievement by any measure. Perhaps disengagement from the mainstream worked to Russell's advantage, providing an environment free of the intrusions and complexities of a densely inhabited Paris and thus the opportunity to focus uninterrupted on his art.

Unlike Rupert Bunny and Bertram Mackennal, Russell did not totally relinquish his outsider status as an expatriate. He savoured the quiet lifestyle of Belle-Île and the insular culture and strong physicality of the landscape in which he settled, the antithesis of the cosmopolitanism and urbanity of Paris. Russell did not bind himself to a social group and lead his life in accordance with the dictates of that group. This too set him apart from Bunny and Mackennal, both cultural centralists. Individual difference was one of Russell's greatest strengths, a trait also evident in Agnes Goodsir and Ethel Carrick post-Fox's death, both single women savouring their independence.

Russell returned permanently to Sydney in 1924 after an absence of some forty-four years. He kept to himself, living quietly and painting luminous watercolours of Sydney Harbour until his death in 1930. A revival of interest in Russell led by Ann Galbally in the late 1970s brought his work to the critical attention of the public⁸⁸ and since then he has been widely acknowledged as a key figure in early Australian modernism. Today Russell's paintings, fittingly, hang with other Australian works in

⁸⁸ In 1977 Sun Books, Melbourne, published Ann Galbally's *The Art of John Peter Russell*. This was followed in 1978 by the exhibition 'John Peter Russell: Australian Impressionist', which Galbally also initiated. The Australian Gallery Directors' Council presented the exhibition with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, Sydney. The exhibition opened at the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam in January 1978 and then toured over the next five months to the University Art Museum, University of Queensland, Brisbane; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. I had the good fortune to view the exhibition in Amsterdam.

our public museums, their freshness and vitality strongly distinguishing them. They convey the impression of having been produced ‘elsewhere’ rather than ‘here’, a visualisation of experiences beyond Australian shores.

Expatriatism positioned Russell in a new culture to which he readily adapted, its landscape an enduring inspiration. It also brought him into contact with several key modernisers of European art, the encounters impacting significantly on his work. Russell embraced foreignness as an integral part of his assimilated ‘being’, becoming, like Bunny, French-Australian, melding two cultures in hybrid synchronicity. Disparate worlds kept both artists apart despite their shared Australian connection and close proximity, demonstrating that expatriatism could be both diverse and multifaceted in its influence. The uniqueness of Russell’s vision of La Côte Sauvage matched the singularity of Bunny’s conception of modern femininity in Paris, both assimilating new approaches as part of the wider Australian artistic experience.

Summary

Expatriatism in Paris and subsequently on Belle-Île was pivotal in the establishment and development of Russell’s career as a painter. His relationship with the Italian Marianna Mattiocco, like that with the landscape of La Côte Sauvage, proved enduring, engendering a robust connection with France that approached a position similar to Martin Heidegger’s fundamental concept of *dasein*, of ‘being’ or ‘being-in-the-world’.

The notion of ‘being and place’ has been employed to interpret eight key paintings from Russell’s *La Côte Sauvage* oeuvre, the series of paintings for which he is most celebrated. This reading offers a significant new insight into his art, differing from the conventional assessment of him as a mainstream Impressionist when, in fact, from the early 1900s the aesthetics of Divisionism and Fauvism came to dominate his work.

Long-term expatriatism strengthened Russell’s commitment to France as ‘home’, without losing his sense of Australian heritage. As with Bunny, cultural assimilation and the embracing of cultural hybridity deeply shaped his vision, sanctioning his engagement with a culture and landscape beyond the Australian experience.

Russell's response was *La Côte Sauvage*, a strong visceral expression evoking the region's wild beauty and a body of work that has assumed iconic importance in the history of early Australian modernism.

Part Three: London

Chapter 4: George Coates – Portraying Edwardians from the Periphery

Introduction

Like John Russell, George Coates did not completely relinquish his outsider status as an expatriate Australian. Working in London between 1900 and 1930, he closely identified with other outsiders, mainly women émigrés, artists, social activists and others from the periphery of society. Although Coates worked within the bounds of the time-honoured British portrait tradition, he did not conform to the stereotype of the Edwardian portraitist. In an era of luxury and opulence, those who patronised leading painters, the aristocracy and growing mercantile middle class, expected their portraits to emphasise qualities that intimately connected identity and social position. Portrait making was a sophisticated social construction, and elaborate artifice was its by-product. Coates, however, never lost sight of portraiture's fundamental intention, to capture psychological depth and physical likeness, offering insight into the artist's character as an 'analogue, existing in parallel to [the] subjects'.¹

While at first glance it may seem that Coates was more conservative than Rupert Bunny and John Russell in his choice of imperial London over progressive Paris as his adopted home; he was not subservient to Edwardian values. As will be argued in this chapter, his outsider position gave him a critical perspective, which influenced how he portrayed Edwardian society in his portraits.

At the turn of the twentieth century, despite changes in the role of women and the status of the working class, Britain remained a strongly class-conscious culture. Coates's egalitarian outlook, the outcome of his Australian background where class consciousness was far less evident, allowed him to transcend prevailing classist barriers and move across the English social strata. This gave him access to the nonconformists of society who were the majority of his portrait subjects. Unlike

¹ Kenneth McConkey, *Edwardian Portraits: Images of an Age of Opulence* (Woodbridge: The Antique Collectors' Club), 1987, p. 9.

Russell, a landscape painter attached to a fixed place, Coates's stage was urban life and the social networks and individuals within it, which allowed him to exploit what English academic Kenneth McConkey dubs 'the lucrative pastures of portraiture'.² The periphery presented Coates with an abundance of sitters, usually self-possessed and independent individuals who sought true-to-life representations instead of the veiled images of a social elite that mainstream Edwardian portraiture personified.

In the first two sections of this chapter I examine, in turn, the allure of turn-of-the-century London as a magnet for artists like Coates and the means by which he integrated into English society, the focus for his portraiture, and London's artistic milieu. I next explore the notion of 'the periphery as subject' through an analysis of several key paintings portraying Edwardian outsiders. Finally, I assess Coates's achievements as a prominent British-Australian portraitist during 'an age of opulence' and the post-First World War period, the conflict bringing to a close this imagined romantic golden age.

The Allure of Turn-of-the-Century London

In moving to London in 1900 Coates joined a growing number of Australian artists who made the city their home.³ Having earlier mastered the French academic style,⁴ he sensed he was prepared to relocate to the English capital, which for him and countless other English-speaking expatriates ultimately became the litmus test for acceptance and respectability as a professionally trained artist. Coates went there to make a name for himself in what his compatriot Tom Roberts jingoistically dubbed 'the heart of empire', a reference to Roberts's own painting *Trafalgar Square* c. 1884, which for him encapsulated 'the triumphal Empire'.⁵

² Ibid, p. 16.

³ By 1900 the following Australian artists resided in London: Ethel Carrick (who was born there), Charles Conder, George Lambert, Bertram Mackennal, Dora Meeson, Harold Parker, Arthur Streeton and Tudor St George Tucker.

⁴ As the recipient of the fourth National Gallery of Victoria Travelling Scholarship, in 1897 Coates travelled to Paris where he spent the next three years studying under the esteemed French painter Jean-Paul Laurens at the At lier Julian before moving to London.

⁵ Virginia Spate, 'Where the sun never set: Tom Roberts and the British Empire', in Ron Radford, *Tom Roberts* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 1996, p. 66.



Image 27 George Coates, 1913

Coates's repositioning to a British context may be seen as an attempt to assimilate into a culture not unlike his Australian past and to involve himself in an artistic milieu in which portraiture since the 1880s had been the quintessential genre.⁶ His desire to find a place in the world of British art lay in a respect for European tradition and a desire to measure himself against the most widely accepted standards of the

day. London had the world to draw upon, and most Australian artists went there sooner or later. As Roberts observed, 'England does not really want anybody; she has everybody and everything. The supply is in excess of the demand ... The only thing is to make her want you and that is difficult, for she only really wants the exceptional in any line'.⁷

At the turn of the twentieth century London was the world's greatest imperial metropolis⁸ and an immense fount of artistic and intellectual creativity and endeavour. Artists flocked there from its vast empire and the world beyond, attracted to its seemingly unlimited career opportunities and cosmopolitan way of life, which despite its urbanity still outwardly reflected the morality and values of the mid-Victorian period. In contrast, its cultural rival Paris embodied bohemianism, more liberated attitudes and an avant-garde spirit. These dissimilarities effectively endowed each city with a distinctive artistic milieu, with Paris generally becoming a focus for younger, more progressive artists and London developing into a global hub for the serious-minded painter or sculptor seeking to build and maintain his or her career. It was most likely the expectation of establishing a viable career that drew Coates to London, even if he did not wholeheartedly embrace its Edwardian values.

Differences in cultural milieu dictated to which city foreign artists travelled and, once settled, how they responded to their new culture. That most Australian artists

⁶ Kenneth McConkey, p. 16.

⁷ Roberts, quoted in Robert Croll, *Tom Roberts: Father of Australian Landscape Painting* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens), 1935, p. 99.

⁸ By 1900 London was the world's largest city with a population of 4.7 million people. It governed either directly or indirectly through the British Empire 400 million people, a quarter of the world's population, on six continents.

established themselves in England is unsurprising. It was the place with which they held an established history and a deep cultural association, and where their national identity began. Language, too, played a significant role; most Australians had no knowledge of French, thus making social interaction difficult and obliging them to make England their home. Coates arrived just before Federation, when Australia was still constitutionally bound to Britain and shared a common nationality code.⁹ His status as a British subject meant that he could travel on a British passport and work in London mostly without restriction. Often overlooked in the discussion on early artistic expatriatism, this factor is pivotal to its construction. In 1900, with ninety per cent of Australians having a British background¹⁰ and with various aspects of Australian life, including law, education and the arts, modelled on the British system, many Australians still perceived themselves as quintessentially British. Of Anglo-Irish descent,¹¹ Coates also had a strong sense of allegiance to the mother country, even though he was not totally accepting of its values possibly because of his part-Irish background.

Typical of English critics of the time, R. Jope-Slade defended London's status as a favoured destination for expatriate artists. In his article 'An Australian quartette', published in *Magazine of Art* in 1895, he advised on a path most Australian artists were to take: 'Mr [Rupert] Bunny has reached the crisis of his career. We want no more students' work however strong. He must give up Paris and come to London and live painter-like, a painter's life if he means to achieve anything more than seasonal sensations'.¹² Independent and self-assured, Bunny rejected Jope-Slade's request while Coates acceded to it, probably because he identified with and felt more comfortable with the lifestyle and artistic milieu of London that were greatly accepting of Australians.

Bunny remained in Paris and thrived. Indeed, both he and Russell actively embraced

⁹ Australia and Britain shared a common nationality code until 1949. This meant that Australian citizens remained British subjects until the proclamation of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948*, which came into effect on 26 January 1949.

¹⁰ See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/demographics_of_Australia.

¹¹ Coates's paternal grandparents, George senior and Margaret Coates, emigrated to the Port Phillip District, as Victoria was known until 1851, from England c.1841. His maternal grandparents, Ephraim and Wilhelmina Irwin, arrived from County Leitrim in the west of Ireland in 1851.

¹² R. Jope-Slade, 'An Australian quartette', in *Magazine of Art* (London), vol. 18, no. 10, 1895, p. 393.

their French situations, radically questioning the conservatism of British culture, with which they were closely acquainted as the offspring of British patriarchal upper middle-class families and through earlier trips to England.¹³ Their familiarity with the mores of British society probably encouraged them to have a more rebellious attitude to it than might otherwise have been the case. On the other hand, Coates's predominantly upper working-class background, with its inherent deference for authority and comparative cultural unsophistication steered him towards mainstream English culture rather than the social *élite* controlling it.

Bunny and Russell were strong, pragmatic and self-contained individuals, well suited to French culture whereas Coates was a somewhat more conventional figure. In his art he identified with eighteenth-century British grand-manner portraiture, using it as the basis for an Edwardian style. His portraits were conservative stylistically, but his choice of subjects and treatment of them were unconventional. However, this did not make him a conservative since he was supportive of social change, for example in women's suffrage and feminism; his artist-wife Dora Meeson's activism supporting significant transformations in these areas.¹⁴ Meeson pushed the boundaries set by male-dominated society and played an important role in Coates's professional life, often initiating introductions for prospective portrait commissions and arranging exhibitions.

In 1905 Coates and Meeson settled in Chelsea, then a bohemian quarter and the haunt of artists, writers and intellectuals, London's equivalent to Montmartre. They joined the large concentration of artists in the area around Glebe Place and Cheyne Walk, where earlier the Pre-Raphaelite movement had its heart. The English coterie included Philip Connard, Augustus John, William Orpen, arguably the most successful portrait painter of the Edwardian period, Philip Wilson Steer and Henry Tonks; the American expatriate John Singer Sargent also lived there. Coates is known to have mixed socially with several of these artists through the Chelsea Arts

¹³ Bunny and Russell enjoyed a privileged upbringing, which included a private education and overseas travel aimed at both becoming engineers.

¹⁴ Coates and Meeson met in 1895 as painting students at the National Gallery School in Melbourne. They married in London on 23 July 1903. Meeson was a suffragette and feminist. Coates is known to have supported her participation in organised protest for these causes. Meeson pursued an artistic career independently of Coates, which incorporated portraiture, streetscapes, still life and landscape. Images of the Thames River were her metier.

Club.¹⁵ Chelsea embodied nonconformity and became a vital focus for Coates's social and artistic life. In his modest studio-residence not far from the River Thames,¹⁶ artists and patrons were entertained and commissions gained, and the 'complex demands of portraiture as a ... challenge of artistic ingenuity and empathetic insight'¹⁷ were met.

London's highly competitive art scene centred on a complex system of private art dealers and exhibition societies, and at the turn of the twentieth century was the most internationally ambitious. Careers were made or lost largely dependent on the artist's ability to adapt to this rigorous market, including connecting with the establishment and surmounting its hierarchical structure of authority. For expatriates like Coates this usually took several years, but once assimilated the path was generally less arduous and less protracted.¹⁸ As I discuss in the next section, it took Coates almost eight years to achieve artistic success in London. It came in 1908 when he started to exhibit on a regular basis at the Royal Academy,¹⁹ then the leading arbiter of public taste in Britain, and began to obtain patronage and sales.

Dualising Identity: Coates's Assimilation into London's Artistic Milieu

As noted in Chapter 1, in their pursuit of expatriatism the six case studies were confronted with the tension between nationalist and internationalist ways of seeing themselves, their art and also their homeland. In confronting the uncertainty of their identities in France, the more progressive Bunny and Russell embraced the notion of Australianness as a vigorous mix of home and adopted cultures. Cultural assimilation, incorporating plurality as well as a new cultural synthesis, empowered

¹⁵ Dora Meeson Coates, *George Coates: His Art and His Life* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons), 1937, p. 43.

¹⁶ From 1905 to 1906 Coates lived at 33 Cheyne Row, Chelsea; from 1906 to 1911 at 9 Trafalgar Studios in Manresa Road; and from 1911 to 1930 at 55 Glebe Place.

¹⁷ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press), 1991, p. 9.

¹⁸ Mostly, it was not easy for Australians to break into the London art world. In 1903, the writer Barbara Baynton commented on the difficulties experienced by expatriate artists in the city: 'I should like to sound a note of warning to artists ... about going to London. For artists, especially, it generally means starvation ... Sometimes an Australian artist gets a picture (skied) in the Academy ... and then his hopes run high; but, the pictures invariably come back to the studio unsold'. Quoted in Penne Hackforth-Jones, *Barbara Baynton* (Melbourne: Penguin), 1989, p. 78.

¹⁹ Coates first exhibited with the Royal Academy in 1903, but it was not until 1908 that he started showing there on a regular basis. He subsequently exhibited with the Academy in 1909, 1912–13, 1915–19, 1924–26 and 1930.

them to ‘to individualise identities and reimagine an interconnectedness’²⁰ that for Bunny linked him with Parisian society and the feminist ideals of modern womanhood and for Russell established his special connection with the culture and landscape of Belle-Île.

To re-quote post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha’s hypothesis, in negotiating the ‘interstitial phase’ of his expatriatism, ‘the liminal space between his Australianness and acquired identity’, Coates had to think and act beyond ‘narratives of originary and initial subjectivities’.²¹ In adapting to British culture, he had to focus on those aspects that facilitated transition, Bhabha’s so-called “‘in-between” spaces [that] provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood ... that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation,’²² thus opening for him the possibility and eventual realisation of cultural hybridity as a positive influence.

In her biography *George Coates: His Art and His Life*, published in 1937,²³ Meeson casts Coates as a retiring and restless figure, which suggests that acquired identity formation for him was a challenging experience. This may account for his propensity for portraying socially marginal figures rather than middle- and upper-class life, so prevalent in Edwardian portraiture. Whereas qualities of race and breeding were essential to the portrayal of the subjects in certain works by Whistler, Sargent and John Lavery, for Coates identification with status groups within society was less important. The egalitarianism of Australian culture, which Coates carried with him as part of his expatriate blueprint, facilitated transcending the boundaries of class structure and steered him towards the more independent and unconventional in society. These were figures with whom he formed an emotional attachment, a ‘felt’ closeness, thus fostering a sense of belonging and engendering loyalty and social interconnection to use British academic Montserrat Guibernau’s model of acquired identity as discussed in Chapter 1.

²⁰ Hajar Yazdiha, ‘Conceptualising hybridity: Deconstructing boundaries through the hybrid’, in *Formations* (New York: City University of New York), vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, p. 36.

²¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge), 1994, p. 2.

²² Ibid, pp. 1–2.

²³ See footnote 15.

The Chelsea Arts Club, a microcosm of London's wider artistic community, became a critical facilitator of Coates's cultural assimilation.²⁴ He joined it shortly after moving to the area and remained an active member, connecting with other painters and sculptors as well as writers, musicians and actors of different nationalities.²⁵ Henry Tonks, one of the foremost teachers of his generation (at the Slade School of Fine Art between 1892 and 1930), influencing fellow case study Ethel Carrick and also Dora Meeson, was a prominent member from the Club's inception. Coates's close affiliation with him and other prominent British artists of the Chelsea Arts Club facilitated his access to London's important network of exhibition societies, a popular and vital part of the city's increasingly diverse commercial art market in the early twentieth century. Like many expatriate artists working in the English capital, Coates took advantage of this system, utilising it to help construct his artistic identity and enhance his reputation. Study of Coates's London exhibitions history establishes that he used the network almost exclusively to promote both image and career, disregarding the more lucrative private dealer-exhibition society nexus. He favoured the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, Royal Academy and Royal Society of Portrait Painters, all leading establishment institutions. The celebrated Royal Academy summer exhibition, where monumental social realism, landscapes and portrait paintings in a wide range of styles by notable artists of the day hung 'on the line', was undoubtedly the most respected, acquainting Coates with the establishment practices of London's art world. Over time his British-Australian artistic identity became increasingly blurred, to the extent that the Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain), the foremost champion of British art, later publicly claimed him one of its own.²⁶

The espousal of a British-Australian identity discreetly sanctioned Coates's entrée into the London art world, affording him unbounded commercial opportunity in a burgeoning art market serving both a wealthy aristocracy and a growing affluent middle class of industrialists and financiers. He did not experience the economic hardship that many other Australians encountered, largely due to the support of

²⁴ The Chelsea Arts Club was established in 1891 by James McNeill Whistler as a rival to the older Arts Club founded in 1863 in Mayfair.

²⁵ The Club remained a male bastion until 1966, when membership was extended to women.

²⁶ In 1964 Coates was included in the Tate Gallery catalogue *The Modern British Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* (London: Oldbourne), vol. 1, Artists A-L, authored by Mary Chamot, Dennis Farr and Martin Butlin.

Meeson's parents, who provided the couple with an annual stipend of £100 (a relative value of \$13,268 today) up until their deaths in 1909, by which time Coates was relatively well established in London.²⁷ As previously discussed Rupert Bunny was the beneficiary of a similar yearly income (bestowed by Alfred Felton in 1904) and Agnes Goodsir also received an annual allowance (of £100 from her father David Goodsir) during the first six years of her expatriatism in France. John Russell was independently wealthy through the support of his deceased father's estate. Financial independence distinguished all four artists from the majority of Australian artists working in Europe, who generally struggled financially. Financial security offered these expatriates greater independence and flexibility, the option to return home should they encounter difficulties or, importantly, to remain long-term or indefinitely if all went well.

In pursuing the expatriate course, like the other five selected artists, Coates was seeking to explore the world from a cosmopolitan position. His achievement in London was basically the outcome of his embracing cosmopolitanism, which compelled him to put aside national allegiances and to view the world multi-dimensionally as a 'fluid, interconnected ... and dynamic whole'.²⁸ This steered him towards assimilationist ambitions, which affected how he saw himself in his art. The critical insights Coates brought to portraiture from his hybrid perspective set him apart from most Edwardian portraitists working in London. Abandoning status groups within society, Coates focused on its periphery, portraying nonconformists and other outsiders.

The Periphery as Subject: Portraying Edwardian 'Outsiders'

Coates lived in Chelsea from 1905 until his death in 1930, a time when this area in central London was at the height of its reputation as a bohemian quarter. At various intervals during this period his neighbours read like a veritable who's who of notable public figures: the crime novelist Agatha Christie, suffragist campaigner Sylvia

²⁷ Dora Meeson Coates, p. 32. According to Meeson, in addition to this allowance between them both artists were making £6 a week as black and white illustrators (p. 24) and Coates was also getting £10 per portrait commission (p. 26).

²⁸ Catherine Speck and Georgina Downey, 'Cosmopolitanism and modernism: On writing a new Australian art history', in *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Art* (Brisbane: Art Association of Australia and New Zealand), vol. 9, nos 1/2, 2008–09, p. 114.

Pankhurst, politician and statesman David Lloyd George, poet T. S. Eliot, Anglo-American writer Henry James, stage actress Ellen Terry and artists Augustus John, John Singer Sargent and Henry Tonks, to name only a few. When one adds to this illustrious group the various Australian artists who also lived in Chelsea at the time – George Lambert, Thea Proctor, Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton et al.²⁹ – one quickly realises that Coates worked within an extraordinary milieu. With few exceptions, these were people not conforming to societal norms, those challenging majority influence in their striving for a more independent lifestyle.

It was in Chelsea that Coates encountered many of the subjects for his portraits, mostly women, individualistic and middle class, and largely undesirous of identity and social position. He met them at the various afternoon teas and ‘at homes’ orchestrated by Dora Meeson, by attending local community activist meetings such as those of the women’s suffrage movement, another Meeson initiative, and through his interaction with their spouses at the Chelsea Arts Club. Two-thirds of Coates’s sitters were female, following the Edwardian artistic trend for women subjects by portraitists who were overwhelmingly male.³⁰ Positioning the female in the passive role of subject – although she might be depicted otherwise, for example Coates’s portraits of women generally portrayed them as strong and independent – was indicative of society’s attitude more generally, where women were still defined physically and intellectually as the ‘weaker sex’, in all ways subordinate to male superiority. Jan Marsh, a researcher at London’s National Portrait Gallery, notes,

While the period witnessed a distinctive shift in ideas respecting gender relations at the level of social philosophy, away from a traditional idea of ‘natural’ male supremacy towards a ‘modern’ notion of gender equity, the process was vigorously contested and by no means achieved. Important legal, educational, professional and personal changes took place, but by 1901 full,

²⁹ This cognate group included George Bell, Charles Bryant, Will Dyson, A.H. Fullwood, Web Gilbert, George Lambert, Fred Leist, Mortimer Menpes, Thea Proctor, James Quinn, Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton.

³⁰ This figure was established by analysing the list of principal works produced by Coates between 1900 and 1930 (his English years), in Dora Meeson Coates’s *George Coates: His Art and His Life*, pp. 232–39. A further sampling of artists and subjects by gender in two important publications on Edwardian portraiture – Kenneth McConkey’s *Edwardian Portraits: Images of an Age of Opulence* (1987) and Anne Gray’s *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (2004) – corroborates this view.

unarguable gender equality remained almost as utopian as in 1800. If some notions of inequality were giving way to the idea that the sexes were ‘equal but different’, with some shared rights and responsibilities, law and custom still enforced female dependency.³¹

Several men, usually those associated with the creative arts or those who occupied positions in the public eye – politicians, war heroes and the like – also sat for Coates, especially during the immediate post-First World War period. Generally he represented them in humble portrayals intended for private rather than public scrutiny. Coates’s military portraiture, where he was required to kowtow to institutional masculinist demands, was an exception.

Coates portrayed individuals with whom he developed a strong connection in the process of his assimilation. They were not typical pillars of society, not ‘the wealthy and famous whose faces appeared in the weekly illustrated papers [and] wanted to be projected with all the force and conviction of art’.³² Rather, Coates’s subjects were relatively ordinary people with exceptional abilities or associations, or from unusual cultural backgrounds. Some were artists, others foreigners, perhaps expatriates themselves who entered British culture in much the same way as Coates. They were people with whom he was able to identify mentally and, in line with Montserrat Guibernau’s study, to ‘foster solidarity bonds’, which the customs and values of British culture strengthened.

Portrait sitters during the Edwardian era did not simply require likenesses; they wanted images of themselves participating in society or at least an intimation of it. As Kenneth McConkey acknowledges: ‘The Edwardian patron had his own pre-existent image ... Role and status must be made clear at the expense, if need be, of psychological depth. Badges, robes of office, the array of possessions were indicators: identity and social position were intimately connected’.³³ In his theoretical text *Portraiture*, American academic Richard Brilliant notes that ‘putting people in their “rightful” place within a social context always requires a high degree

³¹ Jan Marsh, *Gender Ideology & Separate Spheres in the 19th Century*, Victoria and Albert Museum online, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/g/gender-ideology-and-separate-spheres-19th-century/>, accessed 7 July 2014.

³² Kenneth McConkey, p. 16.

³³ Ibid, pp. 9-10.

of cooperation and collusion among the participants in a social encounter'.³⁴ The artist is clearly part of this engagement, his or her involvement adding a further dimension to the complicity. The American art critic Harold Rosenberg describes it as involving 'a consensual ritual encounter, which is both trusting and wary: the subject submits to the artist's interpretation while hoping to retain some control over what that interpretation will be'.³⁵

In her introduction to *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, British art historian Joanna Woodall puts it a different way: 'The portrait involves a perpetual oscillation between artist and sitter, observer and observed. This ultimately fuses into a composite representation of identity'.³⁶ The transaction between artist and sitter, more often a negotiated rather than a partisan arrangement (and in the Edwardian era strongly influenced by changing social factors) establishes an interconnection between the 'selfness' or individuality of the subject and the artist's intention, reflected in the portrait image. For Coates, as for other Edwardian portraitists, this required a particular sensitivity in his interaction with the sitter as well as in the social implications of his representation. Unlike the eighteenth century when the behavioural codes for portraiture were more rigorously defined along gendered lines and 'focused upon the ocular submission of women to men',³⁷ in the early twentieth century, with women increasingly challenging gender roles, these conventions were less rigid. Coates's frequent choice of progressive independent women as subjects most likely led to the 'social encounter' being more flexible, where artist and sitter harmoniously negotiated the portrait transaction.

Prospective sitters would have been acquainted with Coates's professional background, an Australian expatriate with French training. Foreignness, even if closely connected with British culture through colonial and imperial influences, may well have been to his advantage considering that the market from which many of his patrons were drawn, bohemian Chelsea, was also 'foreign' within society. The

³⁴ Richard Brilliant, p. 89.

³⁵ Harold Rosenberg, 'Portraits of meditation or likeness', quoted in Richard Brilliant, p. 90.

³⁶ Joanna Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 1997, p. 21.

³⁷ Angela Rosenthal, 'She's got the look! Eighteenth-century female portrait painters and the psychology of a potentially "dangerous employment"', quoted in Joanna Woodall, p. 147.

hybridity Coates brought to Edwardian portraiture was a mainly non-classist approach, the outcome of the classless culture from which he had repositioned himself. Admittedly, his sitters were predominantly middle and upper-middle class, but he did not see or portray them as such. Perhaps they were not seeking ‘the desire for confident self-projection associated with the exercise of power’³⁸ from which Kenneth McConkey claims the growing British bourgeois portrait market of the period developed. Perhaps, too, in the ‘collusive social contract’³⁹ Coates purposely underplayed the ‘artificiality and other-directedness of self-representation’,⁴⁰ evident in a great deal of class-conscious Edwardian portraiture. In this sense Coates may be seen as adopting a critical attitude towards the British class system: by not directly acknowledging it in his work, he may be perceived as rebuking it.

By placing emphasis on capturing the spirit of a personality over exemplifying social role or status, there is in Coates’s portraiture a refreshing degree of ambiguity in establishing any individual’s class identity. This is especially the case in the



Image 28 George Coates *Arthur Walker and his brother, Harold (The Walker brothers)* c.1912
Oil on canvas, 158.5 x 130.5 cm

generalised portraits, works given generic titles rather than those of the sitters, such as *A Polish lady* and *The Spanish dancer*. In much the same way, costumes and props might allude to profession or some degree of wealth, but in general such artifice was used to convey the individuality, not the social position, of the subject. This is not to say that social identity was not important to Coates’s reading of the portrait subject; but it played a less important role.

³⁸ Kenneth McConkey, p. 16.

³⁹ Richard Brilliant, p. 89.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Coates regarded his three-quarter-length portrait *Arthur Walker and his brother, Harold (The Walker brothers)* c. 1912⁴¹ as one of his finest, exhibiting it at the Royal Academy in 1912 and the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1913. In the following year, *Studio* magazine hailed it ‘a ... masterly ... portrait ... subdued, distinguished by [its] harmony of tone’.⁴² The painting shows the English sculptor and his brother directly engaging with the viewer, Arthur attired in an artist’s smock with one hand in his pocket and the other holding a bronze statuette, possibly his most recent work *The snake charmer*, and Harold placed behind him holding a burning cigarette. Coates probably met Arthur Walker in 1911 after moving to Chelsea, where the sculptor maintained a studio (‘Cedar Studios’) in Glebe Place until about 1928,⁴³ and which Coates regularly visited.⁴⁴

The Walker brothers were from a middle-class family of ship owners. They remained unmarried and lived in Fulham with their sister and aunt, both of whom also remained single.⁴⁵ Arthur attended the Royal Academy Schools and in the late 1880s embarked on a successful career as a sculptor, chiefly of commemorative statues and architectural figures. He capitalised on the civic sculpture program that proliferated in London at the time, gaining numerous major commissions, the most important being *Florence Nightingale* 1915 and *Emmeline Pankhurst* 1930; both bronzes.⁴⁶

Arthur Walker clearly wanted to be portrayed in the guise of his profession and Coates fulfilled the contract by rendering a subject that was to be seen as the embodiment of art itself. He has mitigated this with Harold’s presence and by emphasising the close fraternal relationship between the sitters, the traditional pyramidal composition and subtle tonality of muted greys, browns and greens connecting them. The brothers have been portrayed in surrounding darkness with a soft anterior light washing the upper halves of their bodies and also the base of the makeshift column, punctuating the right edge of the canvas. This unadorned pillar

⁴¹ Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

⁴² *The Studio* (London), vol. 62, no. 258, 1914, p. 204.

⁴³ *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain & Ireland*, database, <http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk>, accessed 24 June 2014.

⁴⁴ Dora Meeson Coates, p. 38.

⁴⁵ *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain & Ireland*, op. cit.

⁴⁶ *Florence Nightingale* forms part of the Crimean War Memorial in Waterloo Place, St James’s and *Emmeline Pankhurst* is in Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster.

appears as a side or background prop in several of Coates's portraits, a technical ploy used to balance the heavily weighted left half of the canvas and, where appropriate, to symbolise the strength and honesty of the sitters.

Coates envisaged something of himself in this confident portrayal of Arthur Walker. Already twelve years into his expatriatism in London and achieving some measure of success, 'the honest earnestness and quiet good manners of both brothers and their "old-fashioned grace"' ⁴⁷ bear some semblance of Coates situation. In 1912 fellow expatriate John Longstaff wrote to Coates: 'Went to the Academy yesterday. Want to tell you how much I appreciate your picture of the two Walkers. Amongst all the banalities in portraiture it stands out as something real and vital'. ⁴⁸

The three-quarter-length study *Lady Courtney of Penwith* was also painted in 1912. ⁴⁹ 'An incurable sentimentalist ... the most beneficent of my sisters ... she was in a sense faultless – she had no malice, no envy, little egotism': so the sociologist and economist Beatrice Webb described Kate Courtney in her reminiscences. ⁵⁰ Married to the Liberal politician and academic Leonard Courtney, on his elevation to the peerage in 1906 she became Lady Courtney of Penwith. Courtney's position in society was exceptional since she ignored convention. Privileged by the great freedom of her upper-class status, she became a leading social worker, suffragist and anti-war campaigner against the Boer and First World Wars. The author and radical British Labour politician E. D. Morel and his pro-pacifist pressure group, the Union of Democratic Control, inspired her liberated principles and activism.

The Courtneys lived in historic Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, a short distance from Coates's abode. Attracted by the strength and realism of his rendering of the *The Walker brothers*, in 1912 Lady Courtney commissioned Coates to paint a portrait of her husband and later of herself. ⁵¹ Both paintings were sent to the Royal Academy in 1913, but only that of Lady Courtney was hung. She wrote in a letter to Coates, 'You

⁴⁷ Anne Gray, *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), 2004, p. 154.

⁴⁸ Dora Meeson Coates, p. 67.

⁴⁹ Collection of the family of the late Sir Richard Holt, 1st Baronet, Liverpool, England.

⁵⁰ Entry dated 6 March 1929, *Beatrice Webb Diaries, 1873–1943* (Passfield Archive, London School of Economics), London, ref. no. PA 222.

⁵¹ Dora Meeson Coates, p. 70.

will be interested to hear that two artists, one of them Stanhope Forbes, came up to me yesterday *enthusiastic* about your portrait of me and S. Forbes said several other artists including [Charles] Shannon were full of praise of it'.⁵² Perhaps Forbes and Shannon, both prominent British Edwardian painters, were attracted to the way in which Coates captured the directness and humility of the baroness, which are exceptional features of the painting.

The portrait represents its subject with factual frontality, looking intently at the viewer with a calm self-assurance, suggesting a woman mindful of her dignity and positive self-image. Two differing aspects of Lady Courtney's personality are revealed: the self-contained private individual and the public humanitarian and internationalist. The simplicity and ordinariness with which she lived her life are



Image 29 George Coates *Lady Courtney of Penwith* 1912
Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown

implied in the modest chair upon which she sits and the unadorned background framing her. Liberated from the millinery and tight corsetry still popular with many women during the late Edwardian period, her head is uncovered and her clothing loose fitting further signs of her independence and unpretentiousness. Coates's youthful projection of Lady Courtney belies her actual age, for she was sixty-five when the picture was painted. Such deception was widespread in Edwardian portraiture, especially among female sitters seeking a

mix of contemporary and classical elements, to appear ingeniously ageless and timeless in their mediated representations.

In their portraits, the Victorians sentimentalised the faithfulness of the dog while the Edwardians favoured understating it. In *Lady Courtney of Penwith*, the half image of the Jack Russell terrier augments the primacy of the subject. A creature of fidelity, it

⁵² Letter dated 3 May 1913, Kate Courtney to George Coates, quoted in Dora Meeson Coates, p. 75.

submissively yields to its owner. Clearly a dog of good pedigree, it was employed by Coates as an attendant prop; its act of obedience skilfully playing down (rather than the Edwardian portrait tendency to emphasise) the sitter's own bloodline, a mix of middle-class entrepreneurship and acquired aristocracy.⁵³

The Spanish dancer 1911-12, *A Polish lady* 1912, *A Russian lady* 1919 and *A Belgian lady* 1929-30⁵⁴ are each identified only by nationality and gender. These are generalised portraits of women for whom generic titling offered Coates greater freedom of interpretation. By emphasising national identity, perhaps Coates was drawing attention to his own, a hybrid British-Australian unprepared to relinquish his



Image 30 George Coates *The Spanish dancer* 1911-12
Oil on canvas, 162.5 x 105 cm

outsider status. Other paintings of women such as *Memories* 1926⁵⁵ are also non-specific in their titles, granting Coates greater freedom to articulate identity beyond the individuality of the sitter. This approach assigned an element of ambiguity and mystique about her identity, shaping self-projection and also disrupting the viewer's gaze – the expectation that the image in the portrait will be identified.

The identity of *The Spanish dancer* is a Miss Vernon, whom Coates met through the painter Philip Connard.⁵⁶ Besides knowing that she was a professional performer, we discern little else about her identity from the painting; it is the subject's unconventional public role that she and Coates wished to reveal. Her lavish costume of a flower-embroidered cream crinoline overlaid with black lace contrasts markedly with the unadorned semi-luminous background, its simplicity and starkness acting as a counterbalance to her

⁵³ Both Kate Courtney's parents were from entrepreneurial railway families.

⁵⁴ The present whereabouts of *The Spanish dancer* is unknown. *A Polish lady* is in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne owns *A Russian lady*; and *A Belgian lady* is in the collection of the Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum.

⁵⁵ Collections of the Manchester Art Gallery, England.

⁵⁶ Dora Meeson Coates, p. 68.

imposing and embellished authority. The dancer's pose is remarkably dramatic: the position of the feet, one almost at right angles to the other, extended hands and upright head suggest she is about to perform a dance step. The exact placement of the figure in the centre of the canvas divides the composition in half, vertically and horizontally, reinforcing the sense of theatricality and spectacle.

Theatricality is the means by which John Singer Sargent presented the figure of *La Carmencita* c. 1890,⁵⁷ a work that in subject, arrangement and tonal structure resembles *The Spanish dancer*, and that was acquired by the French State for the Musée du Luxembourg in 1892. Coates would have seen the painting during his regular visits while studying in Paris in the late 1890s and been influenced by it.⁵⁸ The tonalist approach was inspired by the work of the seventeenth-century Spanish artist Diego Velázquez, whose numerous portraits hung in London's National Gallery, the major source for his popularity in England during the Edwardian era. Velázquez's influence is felt also in *The Spanish dancer* through the importance Coates placed on the unifying power of tone, which he attained through warm underpainting using a medium light brown with a reddish tinge thinly applied over the canvas.⁵⁹ Counterbalancing the subsequent colours painted over it, this technique was used throughout his career and gave an overall subdued tonality to his work.

Primarily a staged portrait, *The Spanish dancer* is uncharacteristic of Coates's portrait oeuvre. Perhaps he was seeking to emulate Sargent's clever conceit – or was there another motive inciting him to stress theatricality over the personality of the subject? It could be that as an émigré Coates identified with Miss Vernon's foreign status, using this portrait to privilege not only her but also himself as an expatriate within British society.

Although it may represent its subject, *A Russian lady* 1919⁶⁰ is not strictly an 'authentic' portrayal but rather a fabricated portrait of Erna Milikoff Debenham as she appeared in fancy dress when accompanying Coates to the Chelsea Arts Club

⁵⁷ Collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

⁵⁸ Dora Meeson Coates, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Hubert von Sonnenburg, 'The technique and conservation of the portrait: *Juan de Pareja* by Diego Velázquez', in the *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), vol. 29 no. 10, 1971, n. p.

⁶⁰ Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

annual costume ball at the Albert Hall on 12 March 1919.⁶¹ Based on the theme of ‘dazzle’, the ball, like many immediate post-First World War social events, aimed to



Image 31 George Coates *A Russian lady* 1919
Oil on canvas, 128 x 102.5 cm

raise funds for the wounded, widowed and orphaned of the conflict.⁶² Public spectacle of this kind flourished during the Edwardian era,⁶³ the Chelsea Arts Ball being especially prominent. In her flamboyant crimson gown and toque, a striking costume acknowledging her nonconformity and individuality, it is unsurprising that Erna Debenham asked Coates to paint her portrait; or did he invite her to pose for him?

Although painted in the privacy of Coates’s studio, the subject is presented in an outdoor setting. Sunlight filtered through autumnal leaves falling irregularly upon the figure had become a characteristic Impressionist theme, but Coates employed it here to enhance the design and scenic illusion of the portrait. The soft atmospheric effect of dappled sunlight contrasts strongly with the brilliance and extravagance of the sitter’s costume. Her concentrated stare, almost as if she was posing intently for the camera, adds to the effect. At the time, the subject would have been looking at Coates face-to-face, artist and subject enmeshed in each other’s gaze, but in the portrait her gaze penetrates beyond the artist to another sphere. It is the space occupied by the viewer, who is drawn in to the portrayal.

What role is the sitter professing to play in this ‘re-enactment’, and how does she wish to be seen? We know little of Erna Debenham’s background apart from the fact that she was Russian, lived mainly abroad, and when in London ‘gave nice little tea

⁶¹ Dora Meeson Coates, pp. 123–24.

⁶² Roy R. Behrens, *Camoupeidia: A Compendium of Research on Art, Architecture and Camouflage* (Dysart: Bobolink), 2009, pp. 414–15.

⁶³ Here, I use the term ‘Edwardian’, in its broadest context extending the generally accepted dateline of 1900–14 to include the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the peace treaty ending the state of war between Germany and the Allied Powers in 1919.

parties'.⁶⁴ In portraying her dressing up and posing in role-play, Coates was perhaps intimating that her identity, like his, was somewhat blurred, detached from but still connected to homeland. Kenneth McConkey notes that:

Portraits supplant the individuals whom they represent. They function as analogues, existing in parallel to their subjects ... At a certain juncture, the artist and sitter collude in the production of an image which, to some extent, becomes a substitute for a living being ... The image becomes an aesthetic object, living yet distanced from normal experience.⁶⁵



Image 32 George Coates *A Belgian lady* 1929-30
Oil on canvas, 76.5 x 62 cm

We know very little about the sitter for another of Coates's portraits – *A Belgian lady* 1929–30⁶⁶ other than she was Mrs Geoffrey Wachter, a friend of the artist.⁶⁷ She sat for Coates in late 1929 and the portrait was completed in time for the 'Third Annual Exhibition' of the London Portrait Society in early 1930.⁶⁸ It is one of the artist's last finished paintings since he died suddenly of a stroke a few months after completing it.⁶⁹ Painted in the subdued light of Coates's studio (the pillar in the upper right of the composition is the

clue), the image captures the sitter in fashionable attire with arms folded, looking directly towards the viewer. Introduced in the 1880s, the fur coat remained a status symbol in the early twentieth century, denoting style and wealth. The most popular and expensive winter furs, sable and ermine,⁷⁰ were in great demand by well-dressed women of the period. In the 1920s, stylish women were wearing ankle-length fur coats fabricated from long vertical strips of pelt with a tight fitting bottom trim, large

⁶⁴ Dora Meeson Coates, pp. 126 and 209.

⁶⁵ Kenneth McConkey, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Collection of the Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine.

⁶⁷ Dora Meeson Coates, p. 206.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 207.

⁶⁹ Coates died on 27 July 1930. His ashes were interred at Rye in East Sussex.

⁷⁰ Alison Gernsheim, *Victorian and Edwardian Fashion: A Photographic Survey* (New York: Dover), 1981, p. 29.

collars and wide cuff sleeves, such as that worn by Mrs Wacher;⁷¹ thus, we can surmise that she belonged to the middle class or privileged upper class.

Her hair is simply and stylishly parted, her lips are modishly coloured bright cherry red, and her dress has a plunging neckline, all of which reveal that she was a ‘modern’, if not quite the ‘new’, woman. Perhaps not a career woman (the glint of a ring suggests marriage and most privileged Edwardian married women did not work), Mrs Wacher was clearly a lady of refinement and quiet confidence, mindful of her appearance and public image. Yet she appears somewhat aloof and detached from her situation. Her gaze may be on the artist but she seems absorbed as well in the void separating them. Perhaps as a Belgian beyond ‘home’, she is dwelling on the absence of place or of former circumstances, which as an expatriate Coates may well have spotted and resolved to make a feature of her identity.

The palette of the painting is limited to sombre browns and muted creams, and the compositional structure is firm. The main elements of the portrait – the face and hands – are connected by the diagonal line formed by the right lapel of the fur coat that divides the composition in half, a method Coates employed frequently in late career to reinforce pictorial harmony. Mrs Wacher did not acquire the portrait for which she sat, suggesting that it was most likely Coates and not the sitter who initiated the transaction.⁷² After Coates’s death, the work remained in the collection of Dora Meeson until 1934, when she gifted it to the Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum upon the recommendation of John Longstaff.

The identities of the sitters in the two remaining generalised portraits examined – *A Polish lady* 1912 and *Memories* 1926 – are unknown. The English painter Ambrose McEvoy, a one-time neighbour of Coates in Chelsea, painted several portraits titled *Polish lady* around the same time.⁷³ The subject looks very similar in the works of both, suggesting they used the same model. In *A Polish lady* and *Memories* the mood of both women is restrained and meditative. Neither engages directly with the viewer; they look down, not forward or up. Their gaze is to another place, to an inner

⁷¹ Henny Harald Hansen, *Costume Cavalcade* (London: Methuen), 1956, p. 101.

⁷² The painting remained in the collection of Dora Meeson until 1934, when she gifted it to the Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum.

⁷³ Wigs, *The Work of Ambrose McEvoy* (London: Colour Magazine), 1923, p.26.

world of private reflection. The arrangement of the hands in both, clasped together and interlocked, intensifies this sense of interiority. Coates sought a deeper more personal characterisation for them, perhaps signalling his own emotional state at the time. Richard Brilliant maintains that ‘Making portraits is a response to the natural human tendency to think about oneself, of oneself in relation to others, and of others in apparent relation to themselves and to others’.⁷⁴ Conceivably, Coates’s interpreting of the head-scarfed woman in *Memories* evoked recollections of his Australian past. Memories are essentially all that remain once a person becomes detached or distanced from their source, whether people, places or events. Coates returned only once to Australia, for fourteen months in 1920–21, during his thirty-three years of expatriatism in France and England. Thus memories of strongly emotional images such as those of family and his hometown of Melbourne were an important part of his life and also of his identity, which expatriatism strengthened.

Lady Forbes-Robertson and her daughter, Jean 1925⁷⁵ depicts the accomplished American-born British actor Gertrude Elliott and her second daughter Jean, also a talented and versatile thespian who would carry on in her mother’s finest tradition as her career now approached its end. In 1900 Elliott married the celebrated actor



Image 33 George Coates *Lady Forbes-Robertson and her daughter, Jean* 1925
Oil on canvas, 127.5 x 102.5 cm

Johnston Forbes-Robertson and together they played many leading Shakespearean stage roles. Bernard Shaw considered Forbes-Robertson the greatest interpreter of Hamlet in the English theatre of the late nineteenth century.⁷⁶ His wife scored notable successes as Ophelia, and as Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Forbes-Robertson was knighted in 1913 for his services to the theatre, making Gertrude Lady Forbes-Robertson.

In this portrait Gertrude and Jean are shown with the instruments of their profession, a

⁷⁴ Richard Brilliant, p. 14.

⁷⁵ Collection of the Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo.

⁷⁶ Robert Hapgood (ed.), *Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1999, p. 91.

guitar and script, possibly for the stage play *Dancing Mothers*. This production provided Jean with her first stage appearance, when she and her mother appeared together as Catherine and Ethel Westcourt in the performance at the Queen's Theatre in London's West End on 17 March 1925. The portrait is most likely an acknowledgement of Jean's introduction to the theatre alongside her mother. Coates's representation of them dressed in fashionable attire with stage accessories links family with their stage careers, individualising them as their *real* selves and objectifying their social roles. The portrait privileges Lady Forbes-Robertson, with her flashy double string of pearls symbolising wisdom, wealth and femininity and her assured and responsive gaze contesting the image of Jean, who is simply dressed and has a dour expression. Not quite the middle-aged matriarch, a role that the growing female challenge to patriarchy endeavoured to promote, her depiction nevertheless imparts style and authority.

Perhaps coveting a separate male identity, with its intimations of influence and authority, led to Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson being portrayed independently from his wife and daughter. By 1924, when he was painted for *Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson*,⁷⁷ the seventy-one year old had long since retired from the stage. With a highly successful career behind him, and with important upper middle-class connections and an altruistic nature,⁷⁸ he is portrayed as an astute and refined senior figure. Requiring no props to augment his identity, Forbes-Robertson's individuality has been condensed in the richly worked face that has the psychological penetration of a Lucian Freud portrait. Trained as an artist before embarking on a career in the theatre,⁷⁹ Forbes-Robertson retained a rebellious streak, distinguishing him and also his family (which included two actors, an artist and a writer) from the traditional elite with whom they were expected to mix, and often did. The blurring of overt class distinction and an increasing mutuality of social power in Britain from the mid 1920s⁸⁰ abetted Coates's association with the likes of the Forbes-Robertsons and

⁷⁷ Collection of the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

⁷⁸ Johnston Forbes-Robertson and his circle of friends are known to have supported various actors, musicians and writers in dire need of assistance.

⁷⁹ Forbes-Robertson trained at the Royal Academy Schools in London before beginning a theatrical career.

⁸⁰ See Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers), 1985, p. 303. Thompson suggests that the social influence of the fact that from the 1920s onwards Labour shared the government of Britain with the Conservatives may have been

other middle- and upper-class patrons, which his Australian egalitarian values endorsed. As progressive Edwardians, the Forbes-Robertsons stood at the edge of change as significant as the lifting of the majority of the population out of poverty.

The portrait of the English painter *Mary Stormont* is undated, but she appears middle-aged, which probably dates it around the mid 1920s. She was the wife of fellow artist Howard Stormont, and from the late 1890s the couple lived in Rye,



Image 34 George Coates *Mary Stormont*
mid-1920s
Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown

where they became the focus of visiting artists including Coates and Meeson, who frequently summered in the East Sussex coastal town. Mary Stormont was best known as a still-life painter and her husband for his landscapes and portraiture. In 1957, now a widow, she bequeathed her home, funds and art collection to the present-day Rye Art Gallery, where this striking portrait of her is located.

Unlike the portrait *Arthur Walker and his brother, Harold* where Coates represented

the sculptor as the exemplar of his profession, in *Mary Stormont* the sitter's artistic credentials are unacknowledged, although her buccaneer hat and trench coat suggest a woman of strong individualism. Not quite the rebel her pirate hat infers, she has been interpreted as a figure of intrigue and charm. The sea forms a deep-blue background, a reference to Rye's long-established maritime links, with which Stormont as a long-term and well-known resident was closely connected. Like many women of her generation, Stormont challenged conventional gender roles in favour of newer, more modern choices. Like Meeson, she rejected the traditional role of women as homemakers and child-bearers in the pursuit of careerism. They joined an estimated 14,000 artists, over a quarter of the professional painters in Edwardian Britain, who were female.⁸¹ Despite the fact that for women, working as an artist was primarily considered a leisure activity, while for men it was a profession, from a

instrumental in affecting change.

⁸¹ Jan Marsh, *Gender Ideology & Separate Spheres in the 19th Century*, op. cit.

woman's perspective and through her independence Stormont captured the vibrancy of the domestic world that inspired her art and attracted numerous artists to her home and studio.

Private portraits such as those just examined formed the greater part of Coates's art. However, between 1918 and 1922 important war commissions from the Australian and Canadian governments predominated.⁸² Portraits of soldiers and commissioned officers, atypical subjects by social norms, became his focus in London in projects honouring distinguished combatants of the First World War. Unlike conventional portrait making, for much of its history military portraiture invoked the often-romanticised ideals at the heart of the British masculine imagination: authority, physical toughness, and robust separation from the feminine sphere. As English military historian Michael Howard writes, 'For the best part of a hundred years, war ... defined masculinity in British society. War was a test of manhood'.⁸³ Thus, in the post-War period, the military image prevailed as the antithesis of feminine identity in portraiture. As with the portraits of Edwardians from the periphery thus far discussed, in depicting leading war figures, Coates can be seen as stepping outside the iconographic tradition of Edwardian portraiture.

Coates's military portraits are among his most well-known works in Australia, and the six commissioned by the Australian Government in 1919 and now housed in the

⁸² Although never an official war artist, after the end of the First World War Coates received important commissions from both the Canadian War Records Office and the Australian Government to paint a series of portraits of key military figures involved in the various campaigns from the two countries. In 1917, the Canadian-British newspaper magnate, Sir Max Aitken (later Lord Beaverbrook), on behalf of the Canadian War Records Office and in association with the Canadian and British Governments, began to assemble a pictorial record of Canada at war. He engaged the services of Paul Konody, then art critic for the London *Observer*, to select the non-Canadian artists to be represented in the collection. That Konody chose Coates, along with fellow countryman James Quinn in company with leading English painters such as Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis, Paul Nash and William Orpen, shows the artist's standing at the time. The two portraits by Coates – *Lance Corporal Frederick Fisher, VC 1918* and *Lieutenant Colonel C.H. Mitchell, CB, CMG, DSO 1919* – now form part of the art collections of the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa. In 1919, the Australian Government commissioned Coates to paint six portraits of distinguished officers who served in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during the First World War: *Brigadier General Thomas Griffiths 1919*; *Major General Edwin Tivey 1919*; *Major General Sir Neville Smyth 1920*; *Brigadier General Cecil Foott 1921*; *Captain Albert Jacka, VC 1921*; and *General William Bridges and his staff watching the manoeuvres of the 1st Australian Division in the Egyptian desert 1922–26*, the only group study in the series. These works are in the collection of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

⁸³ Quoted in Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape), 2000, p. 18.

Australian War Memorial in Canberra are some of the most forthright and compelling studies of the Allied leadership during one of the bloodiest and most dangerous conflicts in the history of international warfare. Like the portraits of Edwardians from the periphery, Coates's military portrayals also examine the notion of identity – how various individuals associated with war. They form an interesting complement to his paintings of non-combatants, which are the more significant because they offer a different view of Coates than that of the archetypal Edwardian painter.

Coates painted many portraits during his long career as an expatriate. The ten discussed here typify his British oeuvre portraying Edwardian outsiders, many of whom, like him, were highly successful within their fields but unconventionally so. They were individuals with whom Coates strongly identified or, to use Montserrat Guibernau's analogy, formed strong psychological and cultural connections, imparting to the work an inner strength and intensity absent in much grandiose Edwardian portraiture. His critical perspective of Edwardian society and its values from his outsider position contrasts with that of the mainstream portraitist, as he is not content with meeting the sitter's desire for a particular kind of self-projection emphasising role and status at the expense, if need be, of psychological depth.

Coates's Achievements

Coates's achievements were in England, not Australia. It was there that he spent the largest part of his working life, returning only once to his homeland. In London Coates secured a reputation as an assiduous and respected portraitist at a time when the rivalry among painters in this genre was at its strongest and the market highly competitive. He secured major portrait commissions from which he made a comfortable living and regularly exhibited with major establishment institutions such as the Royal Academy and Royal Society of Portrait Painters, where he admirably tested himself against the leading British portrait painters of the day, William Orpen, John Singer Sargent, Philip Wilson Steer and Henry Tonks, among others.

Coates also exhibited internationally, notably in France and the United States, receiving critical acclaim. In 1910 he received a *mention honorable* at the Société des Artistes Français and three years later was elected an *associé* of the Société

Nationale des Beaux-Arts for *Arthur Walker and his brother, Harold*, with which he had triumphed at the Royal Academy in 1912. In 1920, through his portrait *The Spanish dancer* being selected for the ‘Carnegie International’ in Pittsburgh, then the most important exhibition of contemporary international art in North America,⁸⁴ the international jury awarded Coates an honourable mention. That same year the painting formed part of a select group of works chosen from the exhibition to tour to the Art Institute of Chicago and Albright (Knox) Art Gallery in Buffalo,⁸⁵ both pre-eminent American museums. That *The Spanish dancer* was shown alongside major works by Jacques-Émile Blanche, Frank Brangwyn, John Lavery and William Orpen exemplifies the high regard in which Coates was then held internationally.

Less than a year after Coates’s death in 1930, London’s New Burlington Galleries presented a major retrospective.⁸⁶ Comprising 196 paintings and drawings, it was a massive exhibition even by present-day standards. A show of this magnitude featuring the work of a single Australian artist had never before been staged in the English capital. It was a remarkable posthumous tribute to a greatly respected artist. Various newspapers published reviews. Paul Konody, writing in the *Observer*, commented, ‘it is upon the portraits that his reputation may rest most securely... [They are] convincing and accomplished ... invariably sound in construction, the foundation ... being ... firm yet sensitive draughtsmanship’.⁸⁷ Charles Marriott in the *Times* spoke of Coates’s ‘sympathetic intuition ... capacity for letting himself become absorbed in the subject ... skill in arrangement and grouping, which ... avoided the decorative convention that goes ill with searching into character’.⁸⁸ The leading art critic Frank Rutter in the *Sunday Times* singled out *The Spanish dancer* and *Arthur Walker and his brother, Harold* as ‘the zenith of his achievement in

⁸⁴ The industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie established the ‘Carnegie International’, in 1896. He intended it to provide an annual selection of contemporary international art from which Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Museum of Art could enrich its permanent collection. Focusing on painting, the ‘Carnegie International’ is the oldest North American exhibition of contemporary international art and continues today.

⁸⁵ ‘A Group of Foreign Paintings from the Carnegie Institute International Exhibition’, Art Institute of Chicago, 27 July – 15 September and Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, 10 – 31 October 1920, cat. no. 24.

⁸⁶ ‘Memorial Exhibition: Paintings and Drawings by the Late George James Coates’, New Burlington Galleries, London, May – June 1931.

⁸⁷ P. G. Konody, ‘Art and artists: George Coates’ memorial exhibition’, in the *Observer* (London), 24 May 1931, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Charles Marriott, ‘Art exhibitions: Mr George Coates’, in the *Times* (London), 23 May 1931, p. 10.

portraiture'.⁸⁹

A smaller exhibition was assembled for the Athenaeum Gallery, Melbourne, in 1934.⁹⁰ As in London the show was well received, with Arthur Streeton in the *Argus* extolling Coates as 'one of the five most distinguished portrait painters Australia has produced'.⁹¹ In 2004 the National Gallery of Australia staged the landmark exhibition 'The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires', the first major international survey of Edwardian art undertaken in Australia.⁹² *Arthur Walker and his brother, Harold* was included, further acknowledgement of Coates's exceptional achievement.⁹³

Coates's art was driven by Edwardian society's insatiable desire for self-representation although his paintings were not conventional swagger portraits promoting social position. The middle and upper classes were his primary markets, and it is in private collections that much of his work is still to be found. Major institutions also collected his portraits, and today they can be found in museums in Australia and Britain as well as Canada – Tate Britain, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Canadian War Museum, National Gallery of Australia and National Portrait Gallery to list just a few: an extraordinary example of how the art of our early expatriates traversed national boundaries.

George Lambert, Bertram Mackennal and Tom Roberts worked in London at the same time as Coates. E. Phillips Fox, Agnes Goodsir and Hugh Ramsay also were located there, but played a less important role because their stays were considerably shorter. Coates formed close friendships with Lambert and Roberts, but seems not to have associated with Mackennal,⁹⁴ perhaps because the latter mixed mainly in

⁸⁹ Frank Rutter in the *Sunday Times* (London), quoted in Dora Meeson Coates, p. 228.

⁹⁰ 'Memorial Exhibition: Paintings and Drawings by the Late George James Coates', Athenaeum Gallery, Melbourne, 7 – 19 May 1934.

⁹¹ Arthur Streeton, 'George James Coates: Memorial exhibition, show all should see', in the *Argus* (Melbourne), 8 May 1934, p. 9.

⁹² Anne Gray, the Gallery's Head of Australian Art curated the exhibition, which focused on the connection between Australian, British, Irish, American and French artists drawn to London at the turn of the century. It was shown at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra from 12 March – 14 June and then at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide from 9 July – 12 September 2004.

⁹³ The work of all six case study artists was included in 'The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires'.

⁹⁴ Meeson makes no mention of Mackennal in her biography on Coates and Coates is not cited in Deborah Edwards's major text, *Bertram Mackennal* (2007).

sculptural circles. Lambert worked in London for almost twenty years, producing a number of celebrated portraits and establishing a reputation as one of the most successful Australian artists of the era.⁹⁵ Mackennal, too, was a long-term resident and achieved major international success in the sculptural arena. The late 1880s and 1890s were Roberts's golden decades as a portrait painter, but in Australia, not England. As an expatriate he attained moderate success, after experiencing early rejections at the Royal Academy and painting little during the war years.

The achievements of Lambert and Mackennal overshadowed those of Coates in British portraiture; nevertheless his contribution to the genre was significant. He portrayed a distinct type of Edwardian, the social outsider, mostly overlooked by other portrait painters at that time. They were people whose proof of identity through the portrait's title was not a prerequisite because they did not seek identity or social position, but imagery with psychological insight and character. Coates painted the image that the sitter presented to him, not to the world. Many were modern women with intelligence and strength of character who were able to choose their careers and pursue independent lives. Dora Meeson epitomised this type, and Coates readily connected with them. In his choice of subject and personal style, the image of Coates recognisably manifesting his British-Australian outsider identity is also to be found.

Summary

Like his contemporaries Rupert Bunny and John Russell in France, Coates readily assimilated into his adopted culture, dualising his identity to actively engage with its artistic milieu. Never fully relinquishing his outsider status or egalitarian values, Coates moved freely within English classist society identifying with both conservative and progressive forces. As a leading portraitist, he was drawn to individuals with whom he closely related, other foreigners and artists as well as independent women, mostly middle class and social nonconformists. This focus set him apart from mainstream Edwardian portraiture.

In not conforming to the established mode of portrait making of the period, namely imagery that overtly aggrandised sitters based on social role and status, Coates

⁹⁵ Anne Gray, *Face: Australian Portraits 1880–1960* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), 2010, p. 70.

challenged conventional British artistic practice and the values it endorsed. This runs counter to the widely held view of Coates as being largely imitative of the tradition of Edwardian portraiture. Like many of the sitters who posed for him, Coates championed individualism and unconventionality, and thus participated in the radical currents of Edwardian art.⁹⁶ Working from the periphery, he also acknowledged the importance of the cultural centre through his close association with the Royal Academy and other establishment institutions to further his career. Like Bunny and Russell, Coates embraced his transformed situation and portraiture became the means by which he conveyed the experience. Less bold stylistically than the work of these French-Australians, his art reveals something of his own inner character as well as that of the sitters through his exceptional creative ingenuity and empathetic insight.

⁹⁶ Coates's commissioned war portraiture for the Canadian War Records Office and the Australian Government, however, was more conformist because of the conditions enforced by these institutions on how the military figures were represented.

Chapter 5: Bertram Mackennal – A ‘Colonial Outsider’ Achieving British ‘Insider’ Success

Introduction

For Bertram Mackennal, the only sculptor in this study, cultural hybridity became the critical means by which he achieved the rare distinction of British ‘insider’ success. As a highly respected practitioner working in London during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, Mackennal attained a position that lay not at the margins of British sculptural production but at its centre. This critical positioning did not indicate subservience to British nationalist values but was a robust embracement of his adopted culture after a brief unresolved period, ultimately leading to coveted royal patronage, unprecedented for an Australian artist.

Mackennal is chiefly celebrated for his exceptional bronze statuettes of the *femme fatale* imbued with Symbolist nuance of the 1890s, of which the arresting *Circe* 1893 is the most renowned.¹ His commemorative monarchical statuary is less well known, essentially because of its British focus. In this chapter I redress this disparity by focusing on two of Mackennal’s most important royal sculptural commissions, the national equestrian statue of Edward VII at Waterloo Place in London and the tomb of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in St George’s Chapel at Windsor. I contend that these projects were the highpoint of Mackennal’s expatriate career and were only possible because of the strategic direction he adopted, the repositioning from a little-known ‘outsider’ to prominent ‘insider’ status within the uncompromising world of Edwardian art. Mackennal adeptly negotiated this path through his commitment to the Royal Academy, a potent symbol of British cultural supremacy in the early twentieth century, and to the New Sculpture movement, a new approach to the medium developed to make sculpture more vital and lifelike. He brought to both a fresh perspective, that of an independent young Australian aspiring to achieve success in a milieu strongly shaped by enduring traditions and history.

Australian sculpture authority Deborah Edwards notes, ‘By almost all of those

¹ *Circe* 1893 was originally produced as a life-size plaster statue. It was cast in bronze in 1901 and acquired for the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in 1910. Between c. 1902–04 a number of statuettes of *Circe* were produced.

criteria upon which artistic success was measured in Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bertram Mackennal proved the most successful artist internationally that the country had produced'.² This achievement was hard won, expatriatism initially proving a challenging experience before he settled in England for the long term in 1894.³ His involvement in the innovative New Sculpture movement provided crucial new openings and his successful exploitation of the establishment authority of the Royal Academy (to which he was elected to full membership in 1922) increased his prominence, giving additional impetus to his integration into the British artistic milieu. By the turn of the century and with his practice progressively dedicated to commissioned sculptural work, Mackennal had become an establishment artist, a recognised senior figure in British sculpture,⁴ however without losing sight of his Australian connections.

The death in 1910 of the benevolently self-indulgent King Edward VII and accession to the throne of his more prudent son, George V, marked a radical repositioning of Mackennal's sculptural career. As the designer of the new sovereign's Coronation medal in 1911, new Georgian coinage and George V stamps (the coveted 'Seahorses', highly significant given the monarch's reputation as a keen philatelist), Mackennal achieved ultimate 'insider' status with royal patronage, 'the first Overseas Briton ever called upon', announced London's *Times* in June 1910.⁵

This association with George V led to Mackennal's production of a significant number of monuments to British royalty, including three statues of the monarch and the important Waterloo and Windsor memorials, among others, to Edward VII, all key signifiers of his assimilation into the host culture and his status as a much-admired British-Australian sculptor in England by around 1910. Apart from a brief discussion of the two memorials in Edwards's excellent publication *Bertram Mackennal: The Fifth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project* (2007), neither has

² Deborah Edwards, 'Adaptability and versatility: Bertram Mackennal – An overview', in Deborah Edwards, *Bertram Mackennal: The Fifth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales), 2007, p. 15.

³ Mackennal had earlier settled in England during 1882–84 and again from 1886–88. He worked in France from 1884–86 and 1891–93, and in Australia from 1888–91, returning to England permanently in 1894.

⁴ Benedict Read, 'Introduction', in Deborah Edwards, *Bertram Mackennal*, p. 11.

⁵ *Times* (London), 21 June 1910, n. p.



Image 35 Bertram Mackennal, c. 1925

received critical attention. They are the focus of this chapter, investigating the path taken by Mackennal to secure and accomplish these major commissions, the embodiment of great sculptural endeavour at an international level which substantially outshone the performances of fellow compatriots then working in Europe, perhaps with the exception of Rupert Bunny, whose overseas career was equally productive although less ambitious than that of the indomitable Mackennal.

I develop the argument of Mackennal's transformation from a colonial 'outsider' to a British 'insider' artist as follows: his early attempt at English assimilation; vigorous embracement of British culture through the influence of the Royal Academy and New Sculpture; monarchical connections; monumentalising monarchy; and achievements.

Mackennal's Early Attempt at English Assimilation

Mackennal arrived in England in mid 1882 aged nineteen,⁶ the youngest, and only the fourth, Australian artist of note to go abroad in the late nineteenth century. His precursors, John Russell (in 1880) and Tom Roberts and fellow sculptor C. Douglas Richardson (both in 1881) had settled in London, and Mackennal's arrival as an aspiring sculptor marked an early absorbing passion to establish himself there. As noted in the previous chapter, nothing mattered more to his generation than the judgement of the English capital, which contemporary British writers like R. Jope-Slade, through their pragmatic assessments in leading art journals, reinforced both at home and overseas.⁷

Mackennal initially shared a studio with Roberts, who introduced him to various local artists including Alfred Gilbert and Hamo Thornycroft, both influential leaders of the progressive New Sculpture. This movement modernised the genre through a

⁶ Mackennal sailed for England on 13 June 1882, the day after his nineteenth birthday.

⁷ See, for example, R. Jope-Slade's art reviews in various volumes of the *Magazine of Art* (London) during the 1890s.

dynamic synthesis of idealism, individuality, naturalism and symbolic meaning in the representation of the human figure, and invigorated sculpture in Britain from the 1880s on. In 1883 Mackennal was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools, where Roberts was a pupil and Thornycroft a visiting instructor. A Royal Academician with a secure reputation as a central member of the sculptural establishment, both achieved in early career, Thornycroft was the exemplar of artistic success on which Mackennal shaped his professional ambitions.

Largely dissatisfied with the Academy School's approach, emphasising shared aesthetic values over individual expression, and with its poor facilities for sculpture training, in 1884 Mackennal left for Paris. That same year, Rupert Bunny arrived in London and followed a similar course, leaving for France eighteen months later after finding his study at St John's Wood Art School similarly disappointing. It was most likely youthful self-reliance and ambition that propelled both artists to Paris. John Russell also moved there, but in 1884 and after a more productive art training at the progressive Slade School. In Paris he and Mackennal became acquaintances.

Rather than enrol at an atelier, Mackennal took a studio and worked independently, staying almost two years in Paris, absorbing the radical surface and expressive innovations in modern French figurative sculpture. Over the next eight years he led a peripatetic life, moving between Britain, Australia and France and frequently living in penurious circumstances. In 1884 Mackennal married fellow Royal Academy Schools student Agnes Spooner and the following year the couple started a family,⁸ exacerbating his financial predicament. Unable to break into the British art world, Mackennal was obliged to take work wherever it was offered, hence his itinerant lifestyle. John Russell and Ethel Carrick also experienced extended periods of unsettledness, but much later in their careers: Russell's prompted by the premature death of his wife Marianna and Carrick's by the outbreak of the Second World War.

Mackennal's failure to establish himself in any one place was unsurprising given his relative youth (he was still in his early twenties) and relative inexperience as a colonial 'outsider' seeking a connection with place. The inherent difficulties

⁸ Around June 1884 Mackennal married English woman Agnes Spooner in Paris and on 17 February 1885 their daughter Henrietta was born in London.

associated with sculptural production – the often slow and challenging techniques, greater cost and smaller commercial market – made it more a problematic career than painting, which undoubtedly added to Mackennal’s difficulties. With no psychological attachment or sense of belonging to place, and socially disconnected from the host culture, to use Montserrat Guibernau’s acquired identity model as previously discussed, during this period Mackennal experienced expatriatism as a ‘traveller’ rather than a ‘dweller’, his life abroad fluid, but detached and undefined. Disconnection from the adopted culture during the process of assimilation and the ‘traveller’ state, whether temporary or permanent, were common experiences for Australian expatriate artists in the early twentieth-century. Artists of other nationalities faced a similar challenge. The struggling Pablo Picasso, for instance, from 1900–04 (his ‘Blue Period’), drifted between Paris and Barcelona before setting up a permanent studio in the French capital. The works from this period depict hauntingly expressive portraits of society’s outcasts, evoking their miseries of poverty and despair even as they suggest Picasso’s own cultural detachment and isolation.

Itinerancy may have disconnected Mackennal from the vigorous sculptural milieu of London, but he did not squander the years spent away from it. In Madeley, a village in the Severn Valley west of Birmingham, from 1886–88 he worked for eighteen months producing items of tableware at the nearby Coalport Potteries. At the same time he sculpted figures from patinated plaster, such as the simple yet robust *A Shropshire boy* 1886,⁹ one of very few extant works from his early expatriatism. Skilfully modelled and conveying a tender realism and idealised beauty, the work openly draws on late-century New Sculptural innovation, brilliantly embodied in the modern portrait busts of Alfred Gilbert, with which Mackennal had developed an affinity.

In 1888 Mackennal spent several months in Paris and through an introduction from John Russell met Auguste Rodin, studying and learning from his methods.¹⁰

⁹ Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

¹⁰ In her book *Bertram Mackennal* (2007), p. 198, Deborah Edwards states that Mackennal ‘may have met [Rodin] in the mid 1880s, but probably in 1888’. However, as stated in Chapter 3 John Russell did not meet Rodin until 1888, when his future wife Marianna Mattiocco first modelled for the French master. Thus, the latter date of 1888 is correct.

Mackennal's later claim that Rodin was 'the most marvellous modeller in the world and the greatest searcher after truth' who fostered his understanding 'that art is not nature, but something grander and superimposed on nature'¹¹ echoed the response of a generation of artists greatly inspired by the French master's aesthetic. Rodin's emphasis on the emotional state, materiality, and the expressive surface inspired the New Sculpture movement, and from the 1890s Mackennal integrated these elements into his own work. Just as Russell's meeting with Monet on Belle-Île in 1886 was pivotal so, too, was Mackennal's contact with Rodin, whose influence on him was significant. Rodin's manifestation of inner psychological life through the sculpted body would be echoed in Mackennal's mature work in ways more explicit than in many of his British contemporaries.

In late 1888 financial imperatives prompted Mackennal to take the radical step of returning to Australia. His first major public commission, the execution of two imposing allegorical relief panels for the façade of Melbourne's Parliament House, provided the incentive, but the artist's failure to make significant progress into the British New Sculpture was certainly a contributing factor.¹² Mackennal remained in Australia until 1891, completing numerous portrait commissions while working on the Parliament House project. In a rare act of munificence, a progressive circle of generous donors, among them Theodore Fink, the well known Melbourne lawyer, *bon vivant* and friend, sponsored Mackennal's return to Europe. Whether the sculptor would have been obliged to stay in Australia without this support is uncertain; however, his commitment to establishing an international career in a country where sculpture maintained a potent influence is undisputed. It would be another two years before he returned to London, employment in Paris (again producing ceramic tableware) and later in Edinburgh as assistant to Scottish sculptor Birnie Rhind

¹¹ Mackennal made this claim in 1925. Quoted in 'Australia's famed sculptor dies. Sir Bertram Mackennal. Designed our coins', in the *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 13 October 1931, p. 9.

¹² The financial incentive of the £1100 commission in 1888 lured Mackennal back to Australia from his first period overseas. The two allegorical relief panels *Australia and Victoria receiving Commerce and Agriculture* and *Australia and Victoria receiving Science and the Arts* were carved for the facade of the building during 1888–90. Drawn from John Ruskin's idea of a 'moral aesthetic', the arts were seen as an equal partner to commerce in the burgeoning Victorian colony. Rich in classically coded emblems, the sculptures symbolise the humanising and civilising vision that government was expected to bring to the colony in the late nineteenth century. As was Mackennal's practice, the panels were carved in his studio, then located at 307 Swanston Street.

delaying his return.¹³

The formative influence of Mackennal's early expatriatism from 1882–94 cannot be overlooked: artistic horizons had been expanded, vital connections made, and his commitment and maturity as an artist significantly strengthened. Solidarity with British and French cultures had been nurtured if not effectively developed, and the revitalising context of Melbourne, a city with which Mackennal felt a close connection because of its familiarity and openness and his family links, provided him with the confidence and determination to return to London even if somewhat circuitously by way of Paris and Edinburgh. His unsuccessful early attempt at English assimilation was perhaps symptomatic of the difficulty of being an outsider in a milieu where insider status was vital for obtaining major sculptural commissions and continuing artistic success. Over the next decade, with initiatives for the production of domestic statuettes and privately commissioned portrait busts, Mackennal actively engaged in a process of recognition and gradual acceptance of his adopted culture as separate and distinct from that which he had left behind in Australia: apart from a brief trip in 1901 and a longer stay in 1926–27, he never returned to his homeland. His persistence with long-term expatriatism after an unsettled and protracted first attempt proved strategically expedient as he progressively positioned himself closer to the centre of London's artistic milieu.

Mackennal's Vigorous Embrace of British Culture: The Royal Academy and New Sculpture Movement

If Mackennal was a young and untested artist lacking in artistic and emotional development when he first arrived in London, some twelve years later in 1894 he was a more astute and skilled practitioner, if not yet the established sculptor he hoped to become. Marriage and the establishment of a family, extensive travel and limited international success (at the Paris Salon in 1892 and 1893, the latter with the life-size plaster figure *Circe* for which he received a *mention honorable*) suggested an artist more at ease and accepting of his situation than the unsettled and struggling sculptor of a decade earlier. Mackennal had clearly found a balance between the

¹³ In 1893 Mackennal assisted Rhind to carve an elaborate scheme of decorative sculptures on the exterior of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. It took Rhind a further five years to complete the project.

‘regression and adjustment’ phases of cultural integration, expounded in Gérard Bouchard’s concept of interculturalism examined in Chapter 1. Using this model, it could be maintained that Mackennal now accepted the development of feelings of belonging and the emergence of a shared culture, with greater confidence and optimism. The psychological tension between continuity and disconnection had been eased, if not completely overcome, as feelings of uncertainty about his future were replaced with a belief in his artistic ability and potential.

Shortly after returning to London Mackennal set up a house and studio in St John’s Wood,¹⁴ then as now a hybrid of village atmosphere and cosmopolitanism attracting artists (for example, Leighton, Millais, Poynter and Watts), writers and other intellectuals in the late nineteenth century. Mackennal’s immediate milieu, like that of George Coates in nearby Chelsea, was a fusion of creative brilliance, even if conventionalism mitigated its strength. Russell and Coates took advantage of ‘place’, connecting with the local landscape and people as primary subject matter for their paintings, and Mackennal too capitalised on the august circle of artists living in close proximity whose enduring influence was centred on its innermost links to the great bastion of nineteenth-century British art, the Royal Academy. Between 1878 and 1918 Leighton, Millais and Poynter presided successively over the Royal Academy,¹⁵ when it possessed greatest power and influence and Mackennal had strongest involvement.

The Royal Academy embodied the nation’s cultural and intellectual might, providing pre-eminent professional training for artists and bringing together annually through its celebrated summer exhibitions the cream of contemporary art by emerging and established artists. Following its Italianate modernisation in the late 1860s, Burlington House in Piccadilly, the Academy’s home from 1868,¹⁶ had become a building of civic grandeur, demonstrating the place of British art within the pantheon

¹⁴ Mackennal lived and worked at 87a Clifton Hill, St John’s Wood from 1894–1904. The building had been a school, which the artist turned into a studio. He lived in the adjoining schoolmaster’s house.

¹⁵ Leighton was President of the Royal Academy from 1878–96, Millais from February to August 1896 and Poynter from 1896 to 1918.

¹⁶ Founded in 1768, the Royal Academy was originally housed in Somerset House on the Strand. In 1837 it was relocated to the east wing of the newly built National Gallery on Trafalgar Square. It moved to Burlington House in 1868.

of great artists of the past and the Academy's vital role in establishing and maintaining that position. Its purpose-built galleries, considered among the finest in London, were adorned with portrait busts of distinguished Italian and British artists, conveying for both artists and visitors the idea of British cultural supremacy throughout.

The juried summer exhibition was the most visible and enduring public face of the Royal Academy. Modelled on the Paris Salon, it was both a promoter and validator of reputation, and a marketplace driven on the one hand by the creation of major private collections by newly wealthy industrialists and on the other by the establishment of new public art galleries, notably London's Tate Gallery in 1897.¹⁷ Private collector passion and institutional commitment brought an unrivalled demand for representative collections of British art whose quality was endorsed by the Academy's summer exhibitions. The range of works – paintings, sculpture, works on paper and miniatures – and the celebratory atmosphere of the annual event made for a unique experience where the flood of visitors (391,000 in the peak year 1879)¹⁸ could browse, discuss and purchase the works displayed. A press-viewing day was reserved for critics, and reviews of the exhibition appeared in major newspapers and periodicals, including a selection of the highlights in the popular *Royal Academy Illustrated*. A royal private view involving the monarch and members of the royal family signalled the start of the 'Royal Academy season', a key event on the upper-class social calendar. To be elected an associate or a royal academician was the highest accolade given, and the presidency of the Academy was a greatly esteemed position held for life.

The exclusiveness and innate conservatism of the summer exhibitions regularly attracted criticism but did not deter the countless British and foreign artists from submitting work. For the Australian expatriates, for whom the selection and installation of works meant the difference between success and failure, Royal Academy acceptance was a critical goal. As discussed in the previous chapter, the

¹⁷ New public galleries were also established in major industrial cities such as Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham.

¹⁸ MaryAnne Stevens, 'The Royal Academy of Arts, 1768–1918', in *Genius and Ambition: The Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1768–1918* (London: Royal Academy of Arts), 2014, p. 24.

Academy played a vital role in launching Coates's English career and was key to the admission of Mackennal into the British artistic establishment.

He exhibited for the first time in 1886, with the biblically themed plaster relief *The five foolish virgins*, now thought lost. Described by Melbourne's social weekly *Table Talk* as 'a most delicate and ideal piece of work',¹⁹ it was the first painting or sculpture by an Australian-born artist to be shown at the Royal Academy. One can conjecture that it had a similarity to the subtleties of form and texture, and the unassuming candour of *A Shropshire boy* (sculpted also in 1886) and thus to the poetic sensibility of Alfred Gilbert's art, then the dominant influence on contemporary British sculpture, including Mackennal. Occurring at a time when he was living in the West Midlands and producing ceramic ware, Royal Academy recognition provided a major boost to his sculptural ambitions.

Unlike Tom Roberts whose works were repeatedly rejected by the Royal Academy during his expatriatism in London in the early 1900s,²⁰ Mackennal enjoyed success. After a break of some eight years he exhibited again in 1894, and continued to show almost annually until the late 1920s, one of the most sustained performances of any Australian artist.²¹ Mackennal utilised the authority and influence of the summer exhibitions as the means by which to assimilate into London's cultural milieu, and once established he continued to employ them to promote his work and career within the ruling classes. Two forms of sculpture dictated his presence at the Royal Academy during the 1890s: mythical figures characteristic of the trope of the *femme fatale*, then enjoying renewed popularity across Europe, and portrait busts of women, a central component of his late-century sculptural practice. Both subjects drew deeply on Mackennal's familiarity and sympathy with salient elements of the New Sculpture movement – a concern with naturalism and poetic symbolism, and with an intense psychological focus on the treatment of the figure, the latter disclosing the enormous impact of Rodin in modernising sculpture.

¹⁹ 'The two Mackennal's', in *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 8 March 1889, p. 5.

²⁰ Tom Roberts had works rejected by the Royal Academy in 1907 and 1908.

²¹ Mackennal exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy from 1894 to 1929, with the exception of 1899–1902, 1917 and 1926–27.

Two major works, *Circe* 1893 and *Miss Grace Dunham* 1896,²² express the disparate yet authoritative and potent allure of Mackennal's work during the decade. The former is a slender and eroticised life-size plaster figure (cast in bronze in 1901) reflecting Mackennal's Symbolist preoccupation with the *femme fatale* as an overt statement of the feminine power and the beauty of the naked adult body. The latter, a stately full-size marble bust, skilfully captures the elegance and refined beauty of its subject, a young American socialite making her debut in London society, and indicates the sophisticated clientele that Mackennal secured from the mid 1890s.

Several writers have commented on the celebrated, Homeric-inspired *Circe*, with Terence Lane's reading perhaps the most insightful recent account:



Image 36 Bertram Mackennal *Circe* 1893
Cast bronze, 240 x 79.5 x 93.5 cm

Circe 1893 marks the turning point in Mackennal's career and achieved all he hoped for ... A large part of the statue's success is that it gives such powerful sculptural form to both the universal theme of human sexuality and suffering, and to one of the major social issues of the time – the question of equality of the sexes ... Mackennal show[ed] *Circe* ... “in the pride of the consciousness of the irresistible supremacy of her nudity”,²³ as the absolute embodiment of female sexuality and power.²⁴

In presenting the Salon-acclaimed sculpture at the Royal Academy summer exhibition in 1894, Mackennal used *Circe* as a highly strategic opportunity to present himself prominently to the contemporary art world of London. As the major work that would demonstrate his capabilities to British sculpture, its importance was presciently articulated in a letter to his Melbourne friend, the medical practitioner and art patron Felix Meyer:

²² *Circe* and *Miss Grace Dunham* are in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, respectively.

²³ Quoted from R. Jope-Slade, ‘An Australian quartette’, in the *Magazine of Art* (London), vol. 18, no. 10, 1895, p. 390.

²⁴ Terence Lane, ‘An Homeric goddess for the modern age: *Circe* 1893’, in Deborah Edwards, *Bertram Mackennal*, pp. 168–71.

It is certainly my biggest attempt in any way – and I feel that I am all in it ... I put so much time, money & thought into my *Circe*, knowing the chance would not come to me again, perhaps for some time, to do a serious large work. I took my opportunity & stinted nothing that I had to push this work through.²⁵

For this key sculpture Mackennal anticipated acclaim, but received instead unexpected condemnation. The Academy's guarded selection committee covered its base, a circular frieze of entwined naked figures, for the duration of the exhibition, deeming its suggestion of temptation and sexual desire a challenge to Victorian morality. 'It made a considerable stir in art circles ... certain audacities in its treatment jarred upon the susceptibilities of the more old-fashioned members of the profession', claimed one contemporary observer.²⁶ This act of concealment fostered intrigue among a curious public, only adding to the notoriety of the work. A number of commentators have suggested that the controversy surrounding *Circe* launched Mackennal's career in London,²⁷ but the ensuing debate, while controversial, did not achieve the critical breakthrough he expected. In a letter from early 1894 to Theodore Fink, Mackennal writes expectantly of his situation:

I ... mean to live somehow in the city, 'tis not a question of good work. The place is made up of cliques and all cliques are against progress. Still I am hopeful and I am slowly becoming known; it takes years of course to push yourself down the throat of the London public, but I mean to win and must.²⁸

Mackennal's stoic determination was vindicated in time. From 1896 his artistic standing and financial circumstances were enhanced by an increasing number of private commissions. That of Grace Dunham was followed by portrait busts of several leading English women – the singer and actress Marie Tempest, heralded by

²⁵ Letter dated 12 April 1893, Bertram Mackennal to Felix Meyer, Felix Meyer Papers, 1975.0069, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne.

²⁶ W. K. West, 'The sculpture of Bertram Mackennal', in *Studio* (London: Studio Ltd), 1908, p. 266.

²⁷ See, for example, Steven Tonkin, 'Bertram Mackennal *Circe*', in Anne Gray (ed.), *Australian Art in the National Gallery of Australia* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), 2002, p. 94 and Gillian Ferguson's biographical entry in Anne Gray, *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), 2004, p. 192.

²⁸ Letter dated 10 March 1894, Bertram Mackennal to Theodore Fink, Theodore Fink Papers, 1997.0127, University of Melbourne Archives, Melbourne.

the *Times* critic as ‘a really excellent work’;²⁹ Lilian May, wife of Phil May the important English caricaturist;³⁰ and Violet Mond (Baroness Melchett), the prominent humanitarian and activist. At the same time Mackennal expanded his production of domestic statuettes, with major works such as *Salome* c. 1895 and *Daphne* 1897³¹ exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1897.

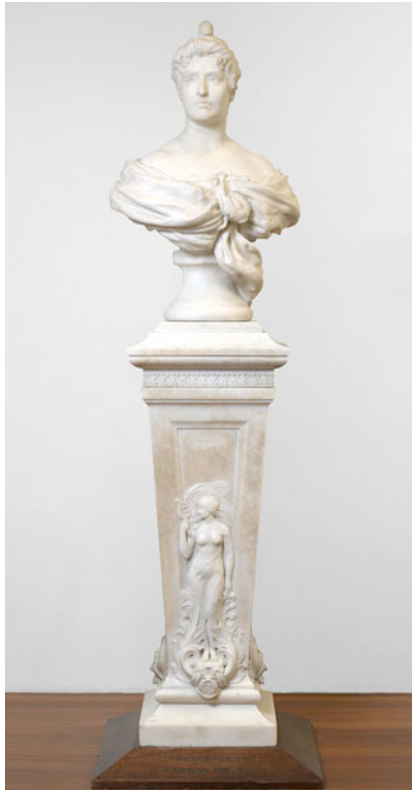


Image 37 Bertram Mackennal *Melba* 1899
Carved marble, 198.5 x 61.5 x 61.5 cm, with plinth

In 1898 Nellie Melba, then at the height of her career in London, commissioned a formal bust of herself which Mackennal completed in the following year. Melba moved in illustrious circles, royalty and aristocracy lionised her, and leading theatrical, artistic and literary figures of the day formed her close circle. Well known for her patronage of Australian artists such as John Longstaff, Hugh Ramsay and Rupert Bunny, with whom she formed a lasting friendship, Melba became a great admirer of Mackennal’s work and in her esteem for him presented one of the two versions of her portrait to the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, where she reigned supreme.³²

Melba’s enduring friendship with

Mackennal, like that with Bunny, was central to the development of his career. It was most likely through Melba that Mackennal met celebrities such as the soprano Marie Tempest and other stars in the world of the performing arts. He would later be quoted as saying ‘I owe it all to Melba. She introduced me to all the big people and I held up

²⁹ *Times* (London), 25 May 1896, p. 4.

³⁰ Mackennal could have met Phil May in Australia in late 1888 just as the latter’s contract with the *Sydney Bulletin* expired and shortly before he returned to England.

³¹ *Salome* and *Daphne* are in the collections of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth and the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, respectively.

³² Melba presented the bust to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 1925. She had gifted the other version to the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in 1900.

their walls for years'.³³

Carved in pure white marble and elevated above eye-level on an elegant tapered, square-based plinth, the realistic life-size bust captures the grandeur and authority of the internationally renowned soprano at the peak of her career. Although it adopts the conventional form for portraits in the late nineteenth century, Mackennal imbued the sculpture with extraordinary life and presence in keeping with the New Sculptural propensity for naturalistic form. The diva's head with its spiralling coil of hair is turned slightly aside, imperiously surveying a presumed audience. Her handsome shoulders emerge from swirling drapery fixed with a large art nouveau brooch in the form of a winged angel and lyre: the starkness of their representation accentuates her throat and chest, and her famed vocal cords and the purity and power of her voice.

The Royal Academy's historic authority in defining British art, proclaimed in the scale and influence of its summer exhibitions, was strengthened in 1875 by the Chantrey Bequest.³⁴ This legacy empowered the Academicians to purchase, chiefly from the summer shows, major paintings and sculptures 'entirely executed within the shores of Great Britain' to form a national collection of British art for what is now Tate Britain. Prior to the 1920s the Chantrey Bequest held immense influence and, for those artists who were fortunate to have work acquired, gave substantial impetus to their careers. In 1907 Mackennal's Academy entry, *The earth and the elements* 1907,³⁵ was a Bequest purchase, a defining moment in the artist's career. The authoritative significance of this purchase, the first of an Australian work, effectively signalled Mackennal's transition from a peripheral to a central position within British art. It had taken some thirteen years to achieve, somewhat longer than Coates, but was nonetheless a remarkable accomplishment given the intense international competitiveness of the London art world and the significance of the Bequest.

When in 1908 the Chantrey Bequest purchased the life-size marble *Diana wounded*

³³ *Herald* (Melbourne), 13 October 1931, p. 13.

³⁴ The prominent early nineteenth century English sculptor Francis Chantrey RA established the Bequest. Chantrey was the leading portrait sculptor of the Regency period (1811–20), producing busts and statues of many notable figures of the time. Upon the death of his widow in 1875, the Royal Academy received under his will the vast sum of £105,000, which was invested by the trustees and the income each year was used to purchase works of art for the nation.

³⁵ Collection of Tate Britain, London.

1907–08,³⁶ the *Connoisseur* noted that Mackennal was the first artist in the Bequest's history to have work acquired in successive years.³⁷ The endowment then comprised 203 works, with paintings greatly overshadowing sculpture,³⁸ but the latter included pieces by several eminent British sculptors such as Harry Bates, Frederic Leighton, Frederick Pomeroy and Hamo Thornycroft, all central figures in the New Sculpture movement. In joining this elite group, Mackennal succeeded not only as an Australian expatriate but also as an exemplar of the New Sculpture, fully engaged with his adopted culture. In his review of British sculpture at the Franco-British Exhibition in London in 1908, the influential London scholar and critic Marion Spielmann boldly signalled the possibility of the Australian's rise to the 'headship of British sculptors'.³⁹



Image 38 Bertram Mackennal
The earth and the elements 1907
Carved marble, 63.5 x 32 x 32 cm

The English art critic Edmund Gosse defined the New Sculpture movement 'as a fresh concentration of the intellectual powers on a branch of art which had been permitted to grow dull and inanimate'.⁴⁰ It was essentially a reaction against a protracted period of conventional academic classicism that had dictated stylistic trends in British sculpture since the late eighteenth century. The comparatively new science of archaeology and extensive travel expeditions in the late nineteenth century brought forth spectacular remnants of Greco-Roman antiquity to inspire new artistic expressions of the

human figure, which a younger generation of British sculptors, apprehensive of the over-romanticising and sobriety of much late Victorian art, sought to transform. Protagonists like Gilbert and Thornycroft as well as Mackennal attempted to

³⁶ Collection of Tate Britain, London.

³⁷ *Connoisseur* (London: Otto Ltd), vol. 88, no. 364, December 1931, p. 424.

³⁸ By 1908, the Bequest had acquired 175 paintings, twelve watercolours and sixteen sculptures.

³⁹ M. H. Spielmann, 'British sculpture', in F. G. Dumas (ed.), *The Franco-British Exhibition Illustrated Review* (London: Chatto & Windus), 1908, quoted in Deborah Edwards, p. 205.

⁴⁰ Edmund Gosse, 'The New Sculpture 1879–1894', in *Art Journal* (London: J. S. Virtue & Co.), no. 56, 1894, p. 311.

modernise figurative sculpture, to make it more vital and life-like and to bring it into a more sustained engagement with contemporary life:

This involved supplanting earlier conventionalised renderings of the human figure with a more focused attention to bodily detail, surface articulation and representational particularity ... Their aim was to activate the temporal encounter between viewer and sculpture, making the viewer more self-aware of her or his own physical relations with the sculptural body. With such a physically charged relation, the nude sculptural body became highly contentious.⁴¹

In joining the movement to invigorate sculptural practice in Britain, Mackennal deepened his connection with the local artistic milieu and also signalled the importance of cross-culturalism to its development. In time and with strategic direction, the New Sculpture and Royal Academy became the focus around which he positioned himself and adapted. This is especially evident in his yearly submissions to the Academy's summer exhibitions and the growing number of civic commissions obtained from the turn of the century,⁴² all of which embraced the New Sculpture.

The colossal pediment for the New Government Offices in Whitehall, completed in 1905,⁴³ and the Chantrey successes *The earth and the elements* and *Diana wounded*, realised two years later, reveal that Mackennal's practice had reached full maturity, both in its affinity with the ideals of the New Sculpture movement and as an expression of his importance within contemporary British art. All three are highly resolved works and demonstrate his subtle handling of form across a broad dimensional scale – from the complex and imposing twenty-metre span of the carved relief sculpture adorning the Government Offices to the life-size bending, twisting figure of the graceful *Diana wounded* to the compact and sensitively modelled *The*

⁴¹ David J. Getsy, “‘Her invitation and her contempt’: Bertram Mackennal and the sculptural *femme fatale* in the 1890s”, in Deborah Edwards, *Bertram Mackennal: The Fifth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project*, pp. 98–99.

⁴² These included the colossal relief sculpture for the pediment of the New Government Offices in Whitehall (completed in 1905); *Glory*, a bronze, over life-size figure for the Islington Boer War Memorial (1904–05); pairs of carved stone figures for the (then) Royal Insurance Building exterior in Piccadilly (1906–08); and the gilt bronze, over life-size figure for the historic St Paul's Cross at St Paul's Cathedral (1908–10).

⁴³ The British Ministry of Works commissioned the Portland stone sculpture in 1904. The building is now H. M. Treasury, the British government's economic and finance ministry.

earth and the elements, which shows the influence of Rodin's sympathetic treatment of the female form.



**Image 39 Bertram Mackennal *Diana wounded*
1907-08
Carved marble, 147.5 x 82 x 62 cm**

In these works, the figures are forcefully life-like and animated, the outcome of Mackennal's exceptional grasp of the modelling sensitivities of Portland stone and marble and attention to bodily gesture as an expression of psychological engagement. 'They ... have qualities of modelling which are within the reach only of a sculptor who has thoroughly studied the structure and character of the human form', acclaimed one contemporary writer.⁴⁴ Antiquity clearly provided the visual source for the smaller sculptures, but the female nudes are 'modern women'.

Mackennal commented how he saw a model fastening her stocking and quickly modelled the pose for the bending figure of Diana.⁴⁵ In the same way, the figural arrangement in the Whitehall pediment embodies the modern-day worker in sculptured allegory, a corporate expression of the economic richness of British industry at the beginning of the twentieth century.

It was probably the immense scale of the Whitehall project that prompted Mackennal's move in 1904 to a larger studio in St John's Wood⁴⁶ and the employment of a number of studio assistants, both key indicators of the important position he now held in contemporary British art as major civic projects increasingly overrode portrait commissions. Conceptual and technical matters such as medium and project scale, together with market forces drove turn-of-the-century sculptural practice in London. Edwardian taste exalted marble over bronze although Mackennal

⁴⁴ W. K. West, p. 266.

⁴⁵ Isobel Jacobs, 'Art abroad – A review', in *Art and Architecture* (Sydney), vol. 9, no. 1, Jan–Feb 1912, p. 418.

⁴⁶ The studio was located at 38 Marlborough Hill, St John's Wood, which remained Mackennal's London address until around 1921.

maintained that carving marble was ‘dreary and not very artistic and ... takes too long to shape’⁴⁷ and followed the New Sculptural preference for bronze for nearly all his major work.⁴⁸ There were exceptions, where marble and other stones were more suitable or tradition demanded the use of an established material, for instance marble in the case of sepulchral sculptures like the tomb of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in Windsor.⁴⁹ As public sculptural projects intensified, Mackennal’s practice attained the level of commercial initiative, with assistants undertaking a good deal of the practical work under his guidance.

Over time commissioned work became the major source of income for Mackennal. This raises the question of the extent to which commissions played a significant part in the expatriate experience of the Australian artists considered in this investigation. Their importance was certainly influential on the part of Coates, however they had little effect on the other four artists’ careers and even with Coates they did not have the significant financial consequence that came to Mackennal. Coates’s post-war commissions for the Australian War Memorial and Canadian War Museum, for instance, were well paid but they did not generate the generous returns that Mackennal enjoyed. John Russell’s predisposition not to follow the commissioning path was probably the consequence of his moneyed background and the reality of working with landscape. With few exceptions, Rupert Bunny and his close friend Ethel Carrick followed Russell, opting for the commercial sale of works through the burgeoning private gallery network. The central theme of androgyny restricted Agnes Goodsir’s patronage, mostly homosexual women, and thus the significant potential for portrait commissions. She, too, used the exhibition system for commercial advantage.

Since commissions were vital to Mackennal’s career, the strategic direction of his expatriatism was also critical. The late 1890s and early 1900s witnessed his vigorous

⁴⁷ Letter dated 6 May 1892, Bertram Mackennal to Theodore Fink, Theodore Fink Papers, op. cit.

⁴⁸ The *cire perdue* or lost wax method of bronze casting refined by the French was preferred because it exactly replicated detail and the expressive trace of the sculptor’s hand, thus lending itself to the New Sculpture’s affinity for immediate, fluid and emotional expression.

⁴⁹ Marble has the advantage, when first quarried, of being soft and easy to work, refine and polish. Compared to most stones, it possesses a finer grain, making it easier for the sculptor to render figurative detail. Marble also has a translucency imparting a visual depth beyond its surface that evokes a ‘waxy’ quality similar to human skin.

embracement of British culture and from the 1910s public commissions flourished. From the evidence presented, it could be argued that Mackennal deliberately formulated his development from an unknown outsider to the vanguard of the New Sculpture movement at the turn of the century, possibly in response to the disappointment of his earlier attempts at cultural assimilation. With the Chantrey Bequest purchases for the nation and his election as an associate of the Royal Academy in 1909, the first Australian to achieve these distinctions,⁵⁰ Mackennal stood at the forefront of British sculpture, an expatriate savouring the rewards of his assimilation of an imported culture with that of the prevailing host.

Mackennal's maturation as a sculptor paralleled the most prosperous, powerful and expansionist era of the British Empire. Where compatriot Tom Roberts saw London as 'the heart of Empire', Mackennal became an esteemed 'sculptor of Empire',⁵¹ signalling the conflation of his 'outsider' and 'insider' status, while never losing sight of his Australian past. W. K. West's article on the artist in *Studio* magazine in 1908 extolled his 'spirit of wholesome emulation [by fellow workers]... prominent position, which he occupies among the best of the ... sculptors in this country ... unquestionable technical power ... aesthetic conviction ... [and] audacity'.⁵² Mackennal's appointment as a Royal Academician in 1922, again the first Australian to receive this honour, was a hard-earned reward for an artist who had dedicated himself to British sculptural initiative over some four decades. In terms of his Australianness Mackennal had become Nellie Melba's compeer; their artistic identities were successfully hybridised and demonstrated European experience and confidence as part of an inclusive self-image.

Monarchical Connections

The death on 6 May 1910 of King Edward VII and accession to the throne of his second-eldest son George V⁵³ was a significant event for British monarchy but also

⁵⁰ Hamo Thornycroft and Thomas Brock, both prominent sculptors and associates, nominated Mackennal for election.

⁵¹ This term was used by Sir Thomas Robinson, Australian Agent General for London, in a toast to Mackennal at the Authors' Club, London in 1913; quoted in 'Sculpture from an imperial standpoint: Mr Bertram Mackennal at the Authors' Club: Art in Australia', in the *London Morning Post*, 16 December 1913, n. p.

⁵² W. K. West, pp. 264–67.

⁵³ The eldest son, Prince Albert Victor died of influenza aged twenty-eight in 1892.

for Mackennal. Immediately winning the favour of the new monarch, the artist was officially appointed to sculpt the national memorial and also the tomb of the late king, both projects occupying his attention throughout the 1910s.⁵⁴ The association between Mackennal and King George V lasted over twenty years, beginning with the sovereign's reign and ending with the sculptor's death in 1931. Such was Mackennal's close personal rapport with the monarch that towards the end of his life, on two occasions he was a royal guest at Sandringham, the Windsor's private residence in Norfolk.⁵⁵ Although less robust than the relationship between Queen Victoria and her favourite sculptor, the Austrian expatriate Joseph Boehm,⁵⁶ the association between George V and Mackennal was just as loyal and genial.

We know from George V's diaries that he met Mackennal shortly after his accession. An entry of 5 August 1910 notes, 'I gave a sitting to Mr Mackennal (a very clever Australian sculptor) who is doing my head for the new coinage and medals'.⁵⁷ However, the monarch, was surely acquainted with the artist's work and growing reputation as early as 1905, when his younger sister Princess Louise unveiled Mackennal's imposing commemorative marble statue of their late grandmother, Queen Victoria, in Blackburn, Lancashire.⁵⁸ A few months earlier the heir apparent's brother-in-law, the Duke of Fife (Princess Louise's husband) unveiled Mackennal's Islington Boer War Memorial situated at Highbury Fields in London.⁵⁹ Such duties were customary for the family of the reigning monarch, but royal patronage on the scale Mackennal received had never before befallen an Australian artist. The mutual appreciation and respect between Mackennal and the House of Windsor reached beyond ceremonial formality, admirably demonstrated in the sculptor's creation of a

⁵⁴ During this decade Mackennal also completed memorials to King Edward VII for Adelaide, Melbourne and Kolkata (Calcutta).

⁵⁵ Mackennal stayed at Sandringham House for several days in January 1930 and again in February 1931 during his preparation of a memorial to Queen Alexandra.

⁵⁶ Queen Victoria's admiration of Boehm's statuettes led to an association with the royal family that lasted from 1869 until his death in 1890. He received over forty royal commissions and was created a baronet in 1889.

⁵⁷ King George V's diary, 5 August 1910, Royal Archives, Windsor, quoted in Mark Stocker, 'Athletes, monarchs and seahorses: Mackennal's coin, medal and stamp designs', in Deborah Edwards, p. 157.

⁵⁸ Mackennal's *Queen Victoria Memorial* 1903–05 is situated on The Boulevard in Blackburn. Princess Louise officially unveiled it on 30 September 1905. A 13 minute film of the unveiling is available at <https://www.google.com.au/#q=princess+louise+unveiling+sculpture+in+blackburn>

⁵⁹ The Duke of Fife officially unveiled 'Glory', the *Islington Boer War Memorial* 1904–05, bronze over life-size figure on 8 July 1905.

stately bust of George V in naval uniform, a gift from the King to Queen Mary in 1911.⁶⁰

George V was earnestly devoted to the British Empire, stating, 'It has always been my dream to identify myself with the great idea of Empire'.⁶¹ The King had a special affection for Australia, visiting in 1881 as a fifteen-year-old midshipman⁶² and again as the Duke of Cornwall and York in 1901, when he opened the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia in Melbourne, the event recorded in Tom Roberts's historically important the 'Big Picture'. It is interesting to speculate if Mackennal's appointment to design the Coronation medal of 1911, the new Georgian coinage and George V stamps was part of the monarch's intended vision to connect himself and therefore Britain more closely with Empire by using the skills of an 'adopted son'. London's *Globe* welcomed the appointment of 'a British subject in His Majesty's dominions beyond the seas'.⁶³ Mackennal recollected later:

When I was presented to the King he greeted me with a pleasant smile and [stated] ... I have heard from an authority [an unnamed equerry] in whom I place the fullest confidence that your work is of the highest artistic merit, and I propose to entrust you with the commission of modelling the portrait head from which the die will be made for all British coins that are to be struck during my reign ... I know I can trust you to make the best of me, and not the worst.⁶⁴

Despite the significance, complexity and urgency of the assignments (all completed before or by the Coronation on 22 June 1911) and the inevitable difficulties and frustrations they involved,⁶⁵ the new King was 'well pleased' with Mackennal's

⁶⁰ *King George V* 1911, bronze mounted on speckled red marble tapered plinth, the Royal Collection, London. The bust was commissioned after the King had seen and been delighted with Mackennal's design of his effigy for the Union of South Africa commemoration medal issued to mark the establishment in 1910 of the historic precursor to the present-day Republic of South Africa.

⁶¹ Brian Harrison, *The Transformation of British Politics, 1860–1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1996, p. 320.

⁶² Prince George visited Australia with his older brother Prince Albert Victor in 1881 as midshipmen in training on HMS *Bacchante*. They arrived at Albany, Western Australia in May, crossed to South Australia in a passenger vessel, travelled overland to Melbourne and from there sailed on a naval vessel to Sydney.

⁶³ *Globe* (London), 22 June 1910, n. p.

⁶⁴ Bertram Mackennal, 'In the days of my youth', in *T. P's and Cassell's Weekly* (London), 24 October 1925, pp.18 and 30, quoted in Mark Stocker, pp. 157–58.

⁶⁵ Royal protocol obligated Mackennal to communicate through the King's private secretary, Arthur Bigge (later Lord Stamfordham) and through him also with the government, Royal Mint and

efforts, the profile effigy becoming his iconic image. Within a month of the Coronation, Mackennal and the prominent London architect Edwin Lutyens were invited by the King Edward VII Memorial Committee to submit designs for a central London monument to the late sovereign. Mackennal would spend a significant part of the next decade working on various monuments to him (including several for India and Australia), the memorial equestrian statue at Waterloo Place, St James's and the memorial tomb in St George's Chapel, Windsor being among his finest and most celebrated.

It could be argued that Mackennal's establishment of close monarchical connections and his execution of these two major projects represent his full submission to British culture and loss of his hybrid identity. However, I maintain they exemplify an artist taking full advantage of his expatriate situation. This corroborates sociologist Hajar Yazdiha's theory that hybridity can offer an opportunity by which the 'dominated can take part in the practice of representation and claim shared ownership of a culture that relies upon them for meaning'.⁶⁶ Furthermore, as was the situation in the case studies thus far discussed, the hybrid interaction of contending national and cultural constituencies resulted in Mackennal adopting a cosmopolitan outlook.

Some theorists like Australian academic Brett Bowden, for example, argue that it is the grounding within a particular community that enables individuals to flourish and maximise their potential.⁶⁷ Bowden identifies cosmopolitanism with individual agency rather than group identity and proposes that a sense of national belonging is a requisite factor in transnational cultural identity formation; it is a fundamental component of, and the stepping-stone to, cosmopolitanism. In negotiating his move from being an 'outsider', after his initial failure at assimilation, to his becoming, through *New Sculpture* and his exhibiting profile at the Royal Academy, an 'insider' who embedded himself with such spectacular success in British sculpture, Mackennal may be seen as making the most of his acquired Britishness to substantially and beneficially influence the development of his art and career. Where

Postmaster General.

⁶⁶ Hajar Yazdiha, 'Conceptualising hybridity: Deconstructing boundaries through the hybrid', in *Formations* (New York: City University of New York), vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, p. 32.

⁶⁷ Brett Bowden, 'Nationalism and cosmopolitanism: Irreconcilable differences or possible bedfellows', in *National Identities* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis), vol. 5, no. 3, 2003, pp. 235–49.

in France Rupert Bunny and John Russell blurred cultural differences, in London Mackennal, somewhat like George Coates, merged localism with cosmopolitan cultural influences, where a primary recognition and acceptance of Britishness over pluralistic affinities were central to his expatriatism. However, this did not make Mackennal an adherent of British nationalism or his art nationalistic. Significant elements of his Australianness were preserved and moreover he brought a different perspective to British culture because of his Australian roots. This is shown in the ease and directness with which he approached sculpture; his natural ability to embrace and employ the influences of New Sculpture in his work; and his openness and modesty as the beneficiary of important royal sculptural commissions,

Some might argue that there was no appreciable difference between British and Australian culture in the early twentieth century. But King George V's choice of an 'Overseas Briton' rather than a home-grown sculptor to monumentalise his late father could be seen as a strategic move by the monarch to bring together or, at least, to reunite two cultures which, as noted in my introduction on page 2, by the turn of the twentieth century had become increasingly disconnected by the emergence of a distinctive sense of Australianness as endorsed by the the founding of the Federation in 1901 and a rebelling against colonialism. Viewed in this context Mackennal's royal sculptural commissions, including the national equestrian statue of Edward VII at Waterloo Place in London and the tomb of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in St George's Chapel at Windsor may well be seen as a reproach to the emergent cultural disconnection between Britain and Australia as opposed to the populist view of their simply underpinning the dominant empire/colony relationship.

Monumentalising Monarchy

That King George V so soon after his coronation formed a working party to oversee the establishment of official statuary and other commemoratives to his late father indicates the great importance he attached to celebrating his national legacy. No less than twenty-four official monuments had been dedicated to his grandmother Queen Victoria following her death in 1901, a number created by some of Britain's

foremost sculptors including Thomas Brock, George Frampton and Albert Gilbert.⁶⁸ Perhaps it was George V's unveiling in May 1911 of Brock's celebrated *Victoria Memorial*,⁶⁹ placed at the centre of Queen's Gardens in front of Buckingham Palace, that triggered his decision to proceed promptly with Edward VII's commemorative program.

In commemorating Edward VII through memorials George V was not only following a time-honoured practice of monarchs publicly venerating their predecessor, but also paying homage to a much loved and respected father. Contemporaries described their relationship as more like affectionate brothers than father and son,⁷⁰ and on Edward's death George wrote in his diary that he had lost his 'best friend and the best of fathers ... I never had a [cross] word with him in my life. I am heart-broken and overwhelmed with grief'.⁷¹

The *Memorial to King Edward VII* is prominently located in Waterloo Place, the



**Image 40 Bertram Mackennal *Memorial to King Edward VII* 1911-21
Cast bronze equestrian statue, 480 cm in height**

stately square where Regent Street links the major thoroughfare of Pall Mall in St James's.⁷² Designed by John Nash, who was responsible for much of the layout of Regency London, Waterloo Place is a veritable outdoor museum of important public sculptures, with the installation in 1921 of

⁶⁸ For a full list of the monuments refer to the link http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_statues_of_Queen_Victoria#United_Kingdom. In total, Britain has some fifty-one official statues dedicated to Queen Victoria created both during her lifetime and after her death.

⁶⁹ The Memorial was unveiled on 16 May 1911 by Queen Victoria's senior grandsons, George V and his first cousin Wilhelm II of Germany.

⁷⁰ Dana Bentley-Cranch, *Edward VII: Image of an Era, 1841-1910* (London: HMSO in association with the National Portrait Gallery), 1992, p. 155.

⁷¹ King George V's diary, 6 May 1910, quoted in Kenneth Rose, *King George V* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson), 1983, p. 75.

⁷² It stands on the site previously occupied by Joseph Boehm's 1891 equestrian statue of Lord Napier, which was relocated in 1920 to Queen's Gate, Kensington.

Mackennal's grand monument adding to its status as a bastion of historic British statuary.⁷³ For the Australian, then at the height of his career, no better site could have been chosen to assert his position as one of Britain's leading sculptors. At the dramatic moment when King George V tugged the colossal Union Jack from its fixture to reveal the towering sculpture,⁷⁴ Mackennal must have sensed enormous satisfaction and pride.

The splendour of the occasion belied the epic struggle to achieve the project. The scheme saw drawn-out debates from the Memorial Committee, the crown and the public on the design and siting of the sculpture. Rather than the more forthright rendering of its current form, Mackennal's earliest models for the work were most elaborate, showing the standing monarch on a platform topped by the figure of the victory-bearer St George and the dragon and surrounded by allegories of peace. Following a final compromise between artistic ideals and physical necessity, including the proposed erection of the statue in Green Park next to Buckingham Palace,⁷⁵ the memorial was placed closer to the city centre and thus symbolically nearer to the people and to commercial enterprise, which the Edwardian era had demonstrated.

Positioned atop an enormous Portland stone base, the impressive 4.8 metre sculpture shows Edward in full military regalia seated on horseback in a resolute yet relaxed pose.⁷⁶ That Mackennal depicted him as 'Edward the soldier' rather than 'Edward the peacemaker' belied the role for which he was lauded during his reign. In reverting to a militaristic model to portray the King, Mackennal encapsulated both the power of Britain and of Empire as well as of monarchy itself during a period that saw formal shifts toward the masculine form as a prime motivator of cultural meaning. Prompted by the decisive impact of the First World War, revisionist efforts

⁷³ Other major sculptures in Waterloo Place include Richard Westmacott's *Prince Frederick, Duke of York* 1834; Carlo Marochetti's *Field Marshall Lord Clyde* 1867; Joseph Boehm's *Field Marshall John Burgoyne* 1874 and *Lord John Lawrence* 1882; and Arthur Walker's *Florence Nightingale* 1915.

⁷⁴ A film clip of the unveiling is available at <http://www.londonremembers.com/memorials/edward-vii-statue-waterloo-place>.

⁷⁵ The choice of Green Park activated public resentment as an encroachment into a central London leisure space, even though a Royal Park.

⁷⁶ The King is dressed in field marshal's uniform, the highest rank in the British army. Three subsequent monarchs, George V, Edward VIII and George VI, assumed the rank on their accessions to the throne, while Edward VII was already a field marshal when he became King.

concerning the representation of the heroic male body surged in its aftermath.

Mackennal received the commission for the equestrian monument in 1911; he commenced work in 1912 and completed the final-scale plaster model by August 1920. An entry in George V's diary of 14 August reads, 'In afternoon May [Queen Mary] and I went to see the statue of Papa in Mackennal's studio in Golders Green, which is very fine and is now going to be cast in bronze'.⁷⁷ The protracted eight-year development of the memorial was possibly due to the exigencies of the First World War, which removed both men and materials from the project.

With his right hand holding a sceptred rod (a symbol of imperial authority) and the left hand guiding the horse upon which he sits, the bushy-bearded Edward with head turned aside imperiously looks out on an imagined Empire from his elevated position in Waterloo Place. In employing a conventionalised image of controlled energy, restraint and authority, Mackennal foregrounded those attributes central to the rhetoric of the Edwardian and Georgian reigns. In keeping with the New Sculptural propensity for observed naturalism, he made no attempt to disguise the King's portliness (the result of excessive consumption), rather large nose and stern countenance. Each has been interpreted true-to-life, the decorative detailing of the monarch's uniform and ceremonial accessories similarly treated. The King's charger has also been faithfully rendered, its strutting action alluding to Mackennal's increasing concern with movement from the turn of the century, intimated in his two Chantrey Bequest successes and characteristic of the New Sculpture and of the modernist sensibility of contemporary international sculpture more broadly.

With the left foreleg raised in a prancing movement, the horse's stance appropriates the forelimb posture observed in the equestrian effigy of the twelfth-century monarch Richard I by the Italian-born French sculptor Carlo Marochetti. Completed in 1851, the statue is located outside the Palace of Westminster. In Mackennal's rendering, the animal's neck is muscularly erect and the tail curved in, emphasising the croup and thigh, the latent strength of the horse, and signifying monarchical power. In his explorations of how best to interpret structurally the sculptural directive of the

⁷⁷ King George V's diary, 14 August 1920, quoted in Mark Stocker, p. 157.

memorial committee, Mackennal had clearly studied Marochetti's statue. Perhaps, too, he had referenced the seventeenth century statue of Charles I by French sculptor Hubert Le Sueur, situated in Trafalgar Square at Charing Cross. The soaring height, the postures of horse and rider and the stateliness of the King Edward VII memorial are salient attributes found also in Le Sueur's bronze. Mackennal's turning to historical French examples to sculpt the equestrian image of the former British monarch in the New Sculptural style symbolised the national–cosmopolitan approach – the *mélange* of local and cosmopolitan influences – that had come to characterise his mature work.

Described at the time as 'a magnificent equestrian statue', the *Memorial to King Edward VII* was unveiled by George V on 20 July 1921 amid great ceremony, what might be regarded today as a remarkable theatrical performance, embracing royalty, statesmen, diplomats and civic dignitaries as well as the Household Cavalry and Brigade of Guards.⁷⁸ Mackennal was to be knighted in Waterloo Place after the ceremony, but because of the abnormally hot weather was asked to go to Buckingham Palace and was knighted there immediately afterwards in private, 'in recognition of distinguished personal service to the sovereign',⁷⁹ the first Australian artist to be so honoured.⁸⁰ If Mackennal's esteemed status as a central figure in British art, 'Australian by birth but international by reputation',⁸¹ required added enhancement, then the highly public and publicised regal unveiling, together with his admission into the imperial order of knighthood, a personal gift of the monarch, were the definitive enrichments.

In the course of his unveiling speech George V drew attention to Edward VII's role as peacemaker:

My father was, above all, a great lover of peace. During the years of his reign it was his constant aim to promote friendship and a better understanding

⁷⁸ See Pauline Kraay (Mackennal's granddaughter), 'A personal memoir', in Deborah Edwards, p. 194.

⁷⁹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Victorian_Order.

⁸⁰ Mackennal was appointed a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (KCVO), the highest class in the order of knighthood. This followed his appointment in 1912 as a Member (Fourth Class) of the Order.

⁸¹ 'Sir Bertram Mackennal: Famous sculptor honoured', in the *Argus* (Melbourne), 22 July 1921, p. 7.

between the nations. His work of conciliation has not been wasted ... The war, which seemed to mark the negation of his efforts, may prove the purification of the thoughts and minds of men and the forerunner of that goodwill between the nations, which King Edward desired and laboured to create.⁸²

There is in Mackennal's sculptural rendering of the late King a tranquillity and mental calm. The monarch looks not only on Empire, but also beyond it to another realm. His gaze, absolute and enduring, is not simply that of a soldier but also of a benign and genial ruler absorbed in contemplation and reflection. Even with the artifice of militarism, with which the statue is outwardly imbued, Mackennal skilfully captured something of 'Edward the peacemaker'.⁸³

In 1911 preliminary discussions were begun with Queen Alexandra, now the Queen Mother and dowager queen, for the memorial tomb for Edward VII in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, since the late fifteenth-century the site of many royal interments⁸⁴ and also of the late monarch's christening and marriage. The need was for both a personal demonstration of the family's acutely felt loss and a public commemoration of a diligent, kind-hearted King for whom the nation felt great fondness. Rather than create an imposing tomb, which was the historical exemplar for British monarchical burial chambers, in collaboration with architect Edwin Lutyens Mackennal decided on a tribute to Edward that was dignified but, like the King himself, in some respects 'too human'.⁸⁵ By rendering the effigies of the portly monarch and his much-admired Danish-born wife Alexandra in a lifelike manner, Mackennal was not only revealing the more relaxed and progressive influence of Edward's reign, but also his own continuing taste for the New Sculpture's 'focused attention to bodily detail ... and representational particularity'.⁸⁶

⁸² 'Edward, peacemaker: Statue in London, work of conciliation, not vain', in the *Argus* (Melbourne), 22 July 1921, p. 7.

⁸³ John Blackwood, however, claims that the equestrian image 'had more to do with the fact that Britain had just won the war than with any great sensitivity to Edward's life and character'. See John Blackwood, *London's Immortals: The Complete Outdoor Commemorative Statues* (London: Savoy Press), 1989, p. 74.

⁸⁴ In 1483 King Edward IV was the first monarch to be buried in St George's Chapel.

⁸⁵ Roy Hattersley, *The Edwardians* (London: Little, Brown), 2004, p. 17.

⁸⁶ David Getsy, p. 98.

Two privately commissioned tombs of the period, *The monument to Lord and Lady Curzon* 1907-13, and *The late General, the Rt Hon. Sir Redvers Buller, VC, GCB* c. 1911,⁸⁷ both by Mackennal and incorporating recumbent figures, served as elegant models for the Windsor project. In fact, Mackennal appropriated organisational aspects of both, the horizontal symmetry of the Curzon effigies and the precise arrangement of the hands as well as the lowermost folding in Buller's uniform and replicated them on the royal tomb, faithfully restated in the figure of Edward. The Queen Mother would almost certainly have seen photographs if not the actual tombs, that of Buller being situated in Winchester Cathedral and thus within easy reach of Windsor Castle. Both memorials were completed during the early development of the Windsor commission, which provided the dowager queen with ample opportunity to contribute in its planning.

The majestic *Tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra* is placed in the restored south choir aisle of St George's Chapel. The work is inscribed on the base near the King's head, 'B. Mackennal 1919',⁸⁸ but it was a further eight years before the draped and empty sarcophagus received the remains of the King and Queen, after she died in late 1925. On 22 April 1927 both coffins were placed in the tomb,⁸⁹ closing a long-drawn-out assignment for Mackennal that had begun with Edward's death seventeen years before.

The top of the tomb comprises the life-size recumbent white marble figures of Edward and Alexandra, with the King's favourite terrier Caesar lying dutifully at his feet. The figures rest on a black and green marble sarcophagus, its surfaces decorated with four polychrome bronze female allegorical figures, four gilt-bronze royal shields and several ornamental bronze panels. The tomb measures 150 (h) x 240 (l) x 130 (d) cm overall and is scaled in proportion to its imposing ecclesiastical setting,

⁸⁷ *The monument to Lord and Lady Curzon* is situated in the memorial chapel of All Saints Church, Kedleston in Derbyshire. George Nathaniel, Lord Curzon commissioned it in 1907. *The late General, the Rt Hon. Sir Redvers Buller, VC, GCB* is located in the north transept of Winchester Cathedral in Hampshire. The 60th Rifles Regiment commissioned it c. 1911 in commemoration of the General who died in 1908.

⁸⁸ An additional inscription, 'Bertram Mackennal' is placed on the base near the Queen's head.

⁸⁹ Prior to this Edward VII's remains were placed firstly on the bench in the entrance to the Royal Vault under the Albert Memorial Chapel at St. George's Chapel. When Queen Alexandra died Edward VII's coffin was placed with his wife's casket in front of the altar in the Albert Memorial Chapel. In 1927 both coffins were placed in the tomb sculpted by Mackennal.

which follows the English perpendicular Gothic style, accentuating verticality and light through clustered columns, pointed ribbed vaulting and striking stained-glass windows.

The stately carved marble figures nonetheless retain an individual composure.

Mackennal portrayed Edward bareheaded and Alexandra wearing a jewelled



Image 41 Bertram Mackennal *Tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra* 1910-27, dated 1919

White marble recumbent figures on a black and green marble sarcophagus, with four polychrome bronze female allegorical figures, four gilt-bronze royal shields and ornamental bronze panels, 150 x 240 x 130 cm

ornamental circlet. The arrangement of the hands – the Queen’s gently resting over her upper body and the King’s parted, his right lightly placed above his chest and his left latent clasping a sceptre, denoting sovereignty and divinity –

strengthens the sense of tranquillity and solemnity befitting the

memorial. The King rests peacefully as if asleep, the embodiment of integrity and virtue, rebuffing his much publicised philandering, notably with the actress Lillie Langtry, the humanitarian Agnes Keyser and Alice Keppel, one of the best known society hostesses of the Edwardian era. Thus the presence of the dog, typically a sign of loyalty and fidelity, is surprising. Perhaps it was a royal pre-conditional veneer to mask for all time Edward’s wilfulness. ‘One of the shining lights of the English Royal Family’,⁹⁰ Alexandra lies ageless and dignified by his side, her devotion and grace visibly evident. Despite its chequered history, their marriage was by all accounts a good one. Side by side, but not hand in hand, as apparently requested by the Queen on her visit to Mackennal’s studio,⁹¹ the effigies are separate but adjoined

⁹⁰ John Blackwood, pp. 72–73.

⁹¹ Described in Henrietta Mackennal’s (the artist’s daughter) unpublished *The Story of a Royal Sculptor: Memories of a Victorian Artist*, edited by Pauline Kraay, n. d; quoted in Emma Hicks, ‘The end of an era: The tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, 1910–27’, in Deborah

at the bases, emblematic of the couple's close bond, if not ideal relationship.



Image 42 Postcard of King Edward VII and his fox terrier, Caesar

The dog Caesar serves a critical purpose by adding a poignant dimension to a monument that could so easily have been formulaic. Its presence brings the work into 'a more sustained engagement with contemporary life' and 'activate[s] the temporal encounter between viewer and sculpture',⁹² both major aims of the New Sculpture. The terrier also fulfils the conventional roles of companion and guardian;⁹³ its inclusion following the long-standing precedent of incorporating dogs in portraits of English royalty. From the early seventeenth century onwards, formal portraits show British kings and queens and their

children happily posing with their beloved animals, from pugs to greyhounds to King Charles spaniels. From portraits of Charles I and his wife Queen Henrietta Maria as well as their children by Anthony van Dyck⁹⁴ to those of Queen Victoria by Edwin Landseer and Charles Burton Barber (with her much loved collie Sharp)⁹⁵ have consistently immortalised British monarchy with dogs. These, however, have been restricted almost exclusively to representations in paintings and works on paper. Mackennal's *Tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra* may well be the first sculptural effigy depicting an English sovereign this way.

The royal marble tomb is an exceptional act of Mackennal's technical brilliance. Among the commonly available stones, only marble has a slight surface

Edwards, p. 210.

⁹² David Getsy, p. 98.

⁹³ These roles were admirably demonstrated at Edward VII's funeral on 20 May 1910, when Caesar, accompanied by a Scottish highlander, walked behind the monarch's coffin ahead of nine kings and other heads of state in the funeral procession.

⁹⁴ See, for example (after) Anthony van Dyck's *Five children of King Charles I* 1637, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Edwin Landseer's *Windsor Castle in modern times: Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and Victoria, the Princess Royal* 1840–43, oil on canvas and Charles Burton Barber's *Sharp* 1872, oil on canvas, both in the Royal Collection.

translucency, comparable with that of human skin. This translucency gives the material a visual depth beyond its surface and evokes a certain realism. Marble also has the advantage, when first quarried, of being relatively soft and easy to work. This allowed Mackennal to render minute detail faithfully, especially in his delicate treatment of the facial features and hands as well as the robes and related insignia. Compared with bronze, Mackennal's preferred medium, marble lacks ductility and strength, requiring special structural considerations, observed here in the artist's focused sculpting to form an ornate and cohesive composition.

Mackennal's practice with marble was to form a model initially in clay and then copy this in stone. Working rhythmically, he would begin to pitch large portions of unwanted marble (the roughing out stage) before rasping and riffling to enhance the shape, including in the *Tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra* details such as the folds of clothing and locks of hair, into its final form. Meticulous polishing enhanced the surface of the marble, which he finished to a matt pure white. By now Mackennal operated two large studios and used numerous assistants, but this did not diminish the exceptional individual skill with which the tomb was ambitiously rendered. It seems artistic collaboration suited him as did his partnership with the project architect Edwin Lutyens.

The *Memorial to King Edward VII* and the *Tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra* signalled Mackennal's recognition as an eminent expatriate sculptor. In their subject matter both sculptures are culturally bound to Britain, yet in composition and sentiment they also reflect critically on other cultures: the lack of pretension evokes Mackennal's sense of Australian identity, and the naturalistic representation of the body and the detailed rendering of its surface variations reveal the intersecting trajectories of New Sculpture and late nineteenth-century French sculpture.

Royal patronage led to respect and esteem, which Mackennal deftly exploited throughout the 1910s and 1920s, gaining further major sculptural commissions like the colossal bronze group *Phoebus driving the horses of the sun* 1912–24, situated at the apex of Australia House in The Strand and well known or at least visibly familiar to Australians because of its prominent location and specific national links. Less familiar, the two royal memorials examined above are deserving of greater attention.

They embody Mackennal at the height of his international career in a country where intense competition made recognition extremely rare, a gruelling test of ability and endurance over which he greatly triumphed.

Mackennal's Achievements

Mackennal's sculptural achievements firmly anchored Australian art within broader British and European cultural contexts. His international career brought with it a number of firsts for an Australian artist: the purchase of works for the British nation through the important Chantrey Bequest; full membership of the influential Royal Academy; a knighthood; and unprecedented monarchical patronage. Strongly influenced in the 1880s by the avant-garde aspirations of British New Sculpture, Mackennal created exceptional sculptural forms embracing domestically scaled work and ambitious civic projects. An expatriate 'outsider', by the early 1900s he had achieved prominent 'insider' success, which he consolidated with the award of two important commissions for British royalty – the *Memorial to King Edward VII* and the *Tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra*, his most significant commemorative monuments. Propelled to centre stage under the auspices of King George V, Mackennal vigorously exploited this privileged position, becoming a recognised senior figure in British sculpture and certainly the finest Australia had ever produced. The 1910s were Mackennal's stellar decade, in which his sculptural production in London eclipsed the statuettes of the *femme fatale* of the 1890s for which he is most celebrated in Australia. At the time of his death in 1931, excluding the small circle of Australian art lovers and institutions that collected his work, Mackennal was better known in Britain than in his homeland, where the dominance of landscape painting and nationalist sentiment conspired against him.

The last entry of George V's diary to mention the sculptor is a terse but poignant valedictory, an esteemed expression of their valued friendship: '12 October 1931 ... In afternoon May & I ... went to ... see Mackennal's medallion of dear Mama ... he, I regret to say, died suddenly on Saturday'.⁹⁶ A little-known expatriate upon his arrival in London in the early 1880s, half a century later Mackennal had become the

⁹⁶ King George V's diary, 12 October 1931, quoted in Mark Stocker, p. 161.

ultimate achiever, his remarkable sculptural output a lasting testimony. As with the other five case studies, cultural hybridity formed the cornerstone of his success, which 'insider' establishment identity enhanced. The synthesis of Britishness with Australianness realised for Mackennal unparalleled opportunities in the international arena. His expatriatism shows that we should be careful about being too separatist in thinking about the historical relationship between Australia and Europe. The oeuvre of this great sculptor demonstrates that restrictive definitions are unnecessary when Australian art embraces the wider world and becomes much richer for it.

Summary

Mackennal challenged and overcame adversities of expatriatism by investing in and embracing his adopted culture. The Royal Academy and New Sculpture movement were key facilitators in his assimilation into London's artistic milieu, over time repositioning him closer to its centre. From 1910 the establishment of close links with the new British monarch, King George V, intensified Mackennal's status as a leading figure in British art. Two important sculptural commissions followed, the principal national memorial to the sovereign's late father King Edward VII, the bronze equestrian statue at St James's, and Edward and Queen Alexandra's marble tomb at Windsor. Both were high points in an expatriatism that saw Mackennal achieve exceptional sculptural feats.

Generally considered a conservative artist who remained faithful to his essentially figurative approach, through his commitment to the New Sculpture Mackennal may be seen as an important pioneer, the outcome of his strategic alignment with contemporary sculptural trends in order to connect more vigorously with modern British art. Such was Mackennal's achievement that what had initially been a private quest became a commercial initiative rendering sculpture a remarkably lucrative pursuit for him. With the exception of John Russell who was independently wealthy, of the artists selected in this study Mackennal most benefited financially from expatriatism. Indeed, it could be argued that he led the way in reworking expatriatism as a profitable artistic endeavour as opposed to its established reputation of inevitable hardship. A consummate sculptor whose Australian and British identities intersected, Mackennal shaped an extraordinary international career. Perhaps with the exception of Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan, who achieved similar

extraordinary acknowledgement after basing themselves in London in the mid twentieth century,⁹⁷ it remains unchallenged in Australian art.

⁹⁷ Boyd and Nolan achieved similar success in London – Boyd worked there from 1960 to 1971 and Nolan from 1951 until his death in 1992. Boyd produced several series of works including the *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Wimmera* paintings and became one of Australia's most highly regarded artists in London. Moving from Australian colonial subjects to timeless and universal themes drawn from mythology, Nolan gained international recognition for the powerful imagery of his work. He became Australia's most acclaimed modern painter and was considered by Kenneth Clark as one of the major artists of the twentieth century.

Part Four: London and Paris

Chapter 6: Agnes Goodsir – A Liberating Journey: Feminism, Lesbianism and the Androgynous Muse

Introduction

Agnes Goodsir remains a relatively obscure figure in Australian art, and her paintings are equally invisible. In late 1899, aged in her mid thirties, from Bendigo in country Victoria she embarked on an expatriate journey that embraced both London and Paris, eventually residing in the latter until her death in 1939. As with Ethel Carrick, the focus of the next chapter, Goodsir moved freely between these major international art centres, absorbing various influences from the diverse cultural milieus in her work. A feminist, in liberal Paris Goodsir asserted her sexual autonomy, alluding to her lesbianism through her art: possibly the first Australian artist to do so.

In this chapter I argue that Goodsir utilised expatriatism as the means to escape late nineteenth-century Australian insularism and embrace an independent European lifestyle focused on her two passions, painting and its dominant subject, her lifelong partner Rachel Dunn, nicknamed ‘Cherry’. I contend that Goodsir’s lesbianism, although discreetly veiled, in the relaxed and tolerant atmosphere of 1920s Paris empowered her to embrace cultural assimilation more freely. Goodsir’s feminism and lesbianism brought a like-mindedness, singleness of purpose and mutuality among the women with whom she mixed, a solidarity not unlike Montserrat Guibernau’s concept of hybridity, of ‘a shared culture ...[and] kinship’¹ and a felt closeness to others, fostering a sense of belonging and interconnection. I demonstrate that due to the exceptionality of Goodsir’s position, she experienced expatriatism differently from the other five case studies, particularly from the four male artists, although there were parallels with Carrick’s experience because of their like sex.

Rupert Bunny, John Russell and Ethel Carrick returned permanently to Australia at

¹ Montserrat Guibernau, ‘Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: A critical assessment’, in *Nations and Nationalism* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell), vol. 10, issue 1–2, 2004, p. 134.

the end of their overseas careers, but Goodsir, like George Coates and Bertram Mackennal, savoured expatriate life until the end. Like them she merged Australianness with the mores of her adopted culture, over time becoming a cosmopolitan Parisienne yet still maintaining an attachment to her homeland. During the 1920s Goodsir became part of Paris's legendary lesbian scene, mixing with prominent American and European expatriates and also with French lesbian artists and writers. Although her sexuality remained a discreet aspect of her life, she openly incorporated these beautifully dressed, sophisticated and independent women in her portraiture, often stressing their androgynous qualities and thus her own sexual orientation and identity. Focusing on the important group of works portraying Rachel Dunn, I contend that the motif of 'lover and muse' may be seen as an outward manifestation of Goodsir's independence from the earlier constrained life of rural Australia and later of Edwardian London, which she ultimately relinquished for Paris, where her heart resided.

The chapter encompasses three key areas, each crucial to a broader understanding of Goodsir's life abroad: escaping Australian insularism, Paris and London; feminism and lesbianism as facilitators of Goodsir's French assimilation; and the androgynous muse, portrayals of 'Cherry'. I conclude with an account of Goodsir's achievements as an expatriate.

Escaping Australian Insularism: Paris and London

Although raised in Melbourne, Goodsir spent the late 1890s in Bendigo before heading to Europe.² Developing from a small gold mining town in the early 1850s, Bendigo was a well-established provincial city at the time of Goodsir's living there. Although the goldfields were multi-ethnic, pre-Federation Bendigo was predominantly Anglocentric with a latent engrained insularism. In Melbourne Goodsir had enjoyed a privileged upper middle-class upbringing sympathetic to an independent and progressive lifestyle;³ her time in Bendigo, however, was

² Agnes Goodsir was born at Portland in coastal western Victoria. In 1865, when she was aged one, her family moved to Melbourne and eventually settled in suburban Brunswick. Goodsir's connection with Bendigo is linked to her maternal grandmother Marianne Tomlins, who lived there. Goodsir regularly made family visits to Bendigo before finally settling there.

³ Agnes Goodsir's father David Goodsir was the Commissioner of Customs in Melbourne. The two-storey Goodsir residence, the heritage listed 'Lyndhurst Lodge', was reputedly imported in the

circumscribed by a society less liberal and less tolerant in attitude.⁴ Study between 1898 and 1899 under the British-trained painter Arthur Woodward at the Bendigo School of Mines and Industries,⁵ using a curriculum based on the Parisian ateliers,⁶ was a welcome distraction and it was most likely his influence that prompted Goodsir to go abroad.



Image 43 Agnes Goodsir, c. 1927

Typical of the post-1880s generation of Australian art students who travelled to Europe after their training, Goodsir saw expatriatism as fulfilling three main objectives: to augment her colonial art training by obtaining specialised instruction at a leading government-sanctioned institution or private atelier; to measure herself against the most widely accepted standards of the day in the competitive artistic milieus of Paris and London, then the two major international yardsticks; and once established, to launch and pursue a significant (and salaried) professional career. Whether Goodsir's sexual orientation influenced her decision to move abroad is unclear. The fact that she chose progressive Paris rather than conservative London as the first stop on her journey, staying there almost six years, suggests that as well as pursuing the above goals she might also have been seeking a position where her presumed lesbianism could be more fully explored.⁷ We know from contemporary accounts that Goodsir 'talked all the time of Paris and she looked forward to her departure'.⁸

1850s and erected on its Brunswick site. The Goodsir's employed servants, including a nurse to care for the eleven children. Agnes went to local schools where she learnt, among other subjects, French and drawing.

⁴ For example, throughout the 1850s the goldfields saw a series of violent anti-Chinese riots, which affected many aspects of European-Chinese relations in Bendigo, including xenophobia and systematic hatred for the next several decades.

⁵ Arthur Woodward was born in Birmingham, England in 1865. He trained at the Birmingham School of Art and the South Kensington Schools (present-day Royal College of Art) before settling in Australia in 1889. After several years in Sale, in 1894 Woodward was appointed Art Director at the Bendigo School of Mines and Industries, a position he held for the next twenty-seven years. In addition to being an accomplished portrait and genre painter, Woodward was also an influential teacher, whose students included Ola Cohn, Madge Freeman and Agnes Goodsir.

⁶ Tracy Cooper, *Songs from a Studio: Arthur Woodward and His Circle* (Bendigo: Bendigo Art Gallery), 2003, p. 3.

⁷ I have no evidence to support this claim, however in light of Goodsir's subsequent lesbian relationship with Rachel Dunn, initiated in London and continued in Paris, it can be assumed that she was cognisant early on of her sexual orientation.

⁸ Linda Harrison (ed.) in Amie Livingstone Stirling, *Amie: Memories of an Australian Childhood*

Her journey was funded by an art union sale of her works in Bendigo and she also received the financial support of her father.⁹

Like much of Goodsir's life, her early years in Paris from 1900–06 and in London from 1906–20 have been poorly documented. Of the so-called quarantined histories of Australian art discussed in Chapter 1, only William Moore's pioneering historical work *The Story of Australian Art* makes mention of Goodsir, and his comments are brief.¹⁰ There are more substantial entries on her in recent focused studies such as Jane Hylton's *Modern Australian Women: Paintings & Prints, 1925–1945* (2000) and Anne Gray's *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (2004).¹¹ Peter Di Sciascio's chapter titled 'Australian Lesbian Artists of the Early Twentieth Century' in *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI* (2011) provides a generous if mainly factual account.¹² Karen Quinlan's *In a Picture Land Over the Sea: Agnes Goodsir, 1864–1939* (1998), the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, offers the most insightful reading, although Goodsir's early expatriatism is only briefly documented.

With the exception of Di Sciascio, these writers do not evaluate Goodsir's expatriatism in a cultural context, especially the importance of gender and her radicalism in terms of sexuality, and their impact on her life and art, which was immense given the exceptionality of her situation. Goodsir was almost thirty-six when she arrived in Paris, significantly older than the selected male artists when they embarked on their expatriate careers.¹³ As with fellow Australians Bessie Davidson and Margaret Preston, and also Thea Proctor,¹⁴ she defied the beliefs of her time that

(Melbourne: Schwartz Publishing), 1980, p. 146.

⁹ David Goodsir continued to support his daughter through an annual stipend of £100, which ceased following his death in 1906, when Agnes's stepmother (her mother died in 1882) inherited the estate. In 1909 the stepmother died and Agnes inherited a portion of the remaining assets.

¹⁰ William Moore, *The Story of Australian Art* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson), vol. 1, pp. 148, 151 and 207, vol. 11, p. 16, 1934 (facsimile reprint, 1980).

¹¹ Jane Hylton, *Modern Australian Women: Paintings & Prints, 1925–1945* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 2000, pp. 28–29, 123 and 133; and Anne Gray, *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), 2004, pp. 80–81 and 173–74.

¹² Peter Di Sciascio, 'Australian lesbian artists of the early twentieth century', in *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing), 2011, accessed online on 18 November 2014.

¹³ George Coates, aged twenty-eight when he left Melbourne for Paris, was the next oldest. The average age of the six cases when they left Australia was twenty-four.

¹⁴ Margaret Preston travelled with the younger Bessie Davidson to Germany and France from 1904 to 1906. Thea Proctor spent nine years in England between 1903 and 1912. All three women undertook further European travel later on, with Davidson residing in France from 1910 until her

travel was unsuitable for women unless in the company of men; most such women were openly criticised for what was seen as ‘forward behaviour’, a challenge to their legal and economic dependency on patriarchy.¹⁵ Carrick too was much older (thirty-three) when she left London more or less permanently for Paris, substantiating the view that both women were marginalised and restricted, the role imposed upon them that of ‘the angel of the hearth’¹⁶ and not of traveller or explorer. Carrick embarked on expatriatism within a few weeks of marrying E. Phillips Fox,¹⁷ and thus did not bear the social stigma, which undoubtedly impeded Goodsir’s assimilation as a single, independent woman travelling abroad.

For Goodsir the transition from small-town Bendigo to the dynamism and cosmopolitanism of Paris, then the world’s third largest city, would have been immense.¹⁸ The differences of culture, especially in the burgeoning artistic hub of Montparnasse where she resided for much of her early expatriatism,¹⁹ were enormous. Goodsir did not speak French; nor did she have connections in Paris, although by 1901 she had befriended Hugh Ramsay²⁰ and in 1902 had possibly also met Rupert Bunny,²¹ when both artists resided close by in Montparnasse.

In Montparnasse ... everyone talked painting. Or simply got on with it. Each morning, in this relatively modern and anonymous district of Paris, man was reinvented ... Schools and movements were brushed aside as artists pursued their solitary quests in studios that anyone could visit ... In Montparnasse a unique atmosphere prevailed and thousands of visitors flocked to Paris to

death in 1965.

¹⁵ See exhibition notes for ‘Travelling with women: Pictures from the collection of the Ateneum Art Museum’, Sinebrychoff Art Museum, Helsinki, 27 March – 10 August 2014 at <http://www.sinebrychoffintaidemuseo.fi/travelling-with-women>, accessed 22 December 2014.

¹⁶ Peter Ackroyd, ‘The feminine principle’, in *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus), 2000, p. 634.

¹⁷ Fox and Carrick married in London on 9 May 1905 and moved to Paris later in May.

¹⁸ In 1900 Paris had a population of 2.75 million people. Only London and New York were larger. Source: *Demographia*, Belleville, United States.

¹⁹ In the early 1900s Montparnasse progressively took over from Montmartre as the focus of artistic life in Paris. Initially, Goodsir lived at 7 rue Léopold-Robert, adjoining Cimetière du Montparnasse. By 1903 she had moved to 18 rue de Milan, not far from Opéra Garnier. In 1905 she returned to the Left Bank living at 8 boulevard Edgar-Quinet on the northern edge of Cimetière du Montparnasse.

²⁰ Patricia Fullerton, *Hugh Ramsay: His Life and Work* (Melbourne: Hudson Publishing), 1988, p. 144.

²¹ In 1902 Bunny lived at 5 rue Mizon, near Gare Montparnasse, which was within easy walking distance of Goodsir’s abode in rue Léopold-Robert.

savour it. The heyday of modernism had begun and in Montparnasse the curtain was rising on a new era.²²

So wrote French art commentator Valérie Bougault in the early twentieth century. But as British art historian John Milner notes of the artist's life in Paris, 'fame and splendour were scarce and life for the unknown artist could be hard in the extreme ... any artist in order to succeed ... had to ... become ... adaptable and clever'.²³ As an outsider, the ability to adapt oneself psychologically, culturally and territorially to the foreignness of the host culture remained a prevalent issue for our expatriates; the four case studies thus far discussed illustrate this in the different ways they negotiated their expatriate positions. As women, Goodsir and Carrick experienced expatriatism from the perspective of the feminist ideals of modern womanhood, in the case of Goodsir with the added complexities of being unmarried and homosexual. They had to overcome particular obstacles not faced by their male counterparts in their assimilation into their host cultures, which influenced both how they adapted and how they saw themselves in their art.

Today gender equality and sexuality are generally respected in western society, but the difficulties encountered by women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when male authority was absolute in nearly all aspects of contemporary life continue to be underestimated or misunderstood. Women artists endured prejudice and male chauvinism simply because of their sex. Three prominent examples follow:

- Study of the nude model for aspiring female artists was largely unavailable since until the mid 1890s in art training institutions it was considered improper and possibly even dangerous for them.²⁴
- Families needed to have an interest in the arts and money to educate their daughters abroad and unmarried young women had to be chaperoned by older women or men in any form of travel.²⁵

²² Valérie Bougault, *Paris Montparnasse: The Heyday of Modern Art, 1910–1940* (Paris: Editions Pierre Terrail), 1997, p. 9.

²³ John Milner, *The Studios of Paris: The Capital of Art in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1988, p. 27.

²⁴ Linda L. Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2008, pp. 86–87.

²⁵ Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Press), 1996, pp. 151–52.

- Men invariably controlled exhibition juries and the art society-commercial gallery nexus, restricting women's ability to exhibit their work.²⁶

Goodsir suffered these various injustices, studying at ateliers largely segregated by gender, reliant upon her father's generosity until his benevolence was posthumously terminated by her stepmother;²⁷ and having solo exhibitions only in late career due to her powerlessness to overcome the male hegemony of the Australian, British and French commercial gallery networks. Bunny, Russell, Coates and Mackennal suffered none of these inequalities, their gender working for rather than against them. Expatriatism required of women artists not only what the English writer Peter Ackroyd refers to as 'the feminine principle' – women engaging in an egalitarian spirit of their own interests²⁸ – but also a strength and resilience empowering them to overcome gender-related barriers, the equivalent today of systematic discrimination, which expatriatism, like a great deal of turn-of-the-century life, encompassed. To her credit Goodsir mostly surmounted these hurdles, which makes her expatriatism, like Carricks, the more remarkable.

In Paris Goodsir threw herself into her art studies, receiving private atelier instruction in turn at Académie Delécluse from 1900, Académie Colarossi under Raphaël Collin from 1902–03, Académie Julian with Jean-Paul Laurens (where Rupert Bunny and George Coates had earlier studied and where study of the male nude was available to women),²⁹ and finally at Académie de la Grande Chaumière under Lucien Simon.

Goodsir's training at the most venerable ateliers and with teachers whose fame and influence were widespread and far-reaching in their day suggests she was seeking modern artistic skills as the cornerstone of her painting career. Raphaël Collin

²⁶ For an account of the French Salon juries see Jacques Lethève, *Daily Life of French Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Hilary E. Paddon (London: George Allen & Unwin), 1972, pp. 111–16; for the Royal Academy selection committees see MaryAnne Stevens, *Genius and Ambition: The Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1768–1918* (London: Royal Academy of Arts), pp. 18–21 and 98–99.

²⁷ The death of David Goodsir in 1906 was a turning point financially for Agnes. Her stepmother inherited his estate and discontinued the artist's annual allowance of £100 that she had received until that time.

²⁸ Peter Ackroyd, pp. 637–38.

²⁹ Rosemary Betterton, 'How do women look? The female nude in the work of Suzanne Valadon', in the *Feminist Review* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), no. 19, Spring 1985, p. 13.

figured prominently in artistic exchanges between Paris and Tokyo during the late nineteenth century and Japanese painters such as Kuroda Seiki and Kume Keichirō, among others, studied at the Académie Colarossi. This may account for the distinct flat decorative patterns embodied in the wallpaper, fabrics, furniture and porcelain in Goodsir's paintings, *Japonisme* (as with John Russell almost two decades earlier) becoming a significant influence on her art.

During this early period of expatriatism Goodsir exhibited several portraits at the Société des Artistes Français (in 1902 and 1903) and the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (in 1905–07),³⁰ a turning point in her career. The importance of the Paris Salons could be seen in the influx of visitors to their celebrated exhibitions, the extensive coverage devoted to them in most journals and newspapers, the system of awards with medal winners becoming 'the triumphant victors of the year', and the valuable encounters between artists and patrons. As Jacques Lethève comments in his analysis of their impact, 'To be talked of where it mattered, in circles frequented by wealthy art lovers and in that section of the press read by society people, this was the artist's dream'.³¹ Goodsir exploited the Salons in much the same way as Bunny during his career, taking advantage of their prominence and reputation to promote her work and name, although Bunny exhibited more frequently and to greater critical acclaim. For Goodsir as for Bunny, and also for Coates and Mackennal in the Royal Academy in London, these massive showpieces of contemporary art launched her international career, simultaneously crystallising public and critical interest in her work and facilitating her assimilation into the Parisian artistic milieu.

When Goodsir painted *La femme de ménage* (*The housekeeper*) 1905 she was already in her early forties and an expatriate of some five years. This slim canvas depicts a French housekeeper standing assertively in a stylish interior with the accoutrements of her profession – a broom, dustpan, apron and headscarf – looking directly from the painting with comfortable self-assurance. The room is formal and handsomely decorated, suggestive of an urban rather than a rustic interior. In keeping

³⁰ Pierre Sanchez, *Les Catalogues des Salons de la Société des Artistes Français, 1902–1904*, vol. XX (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2008–12 and Gaïte Dugnat, *Les Catalogues des Salons de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1901–10*, vols. III–IV (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2002. Goodsir also exhibited at the New Salon from 1921–25.

³¹ Jacques Lethève, p.128.

with her progressivism, Goodsir may have been commenting on the pomposity and artifice of much Edwardian portraiture, although not at the expense of her subject. In portraying the quiet dignity of a servant posed as if she were someone of importance, Goodsir's approach combines two different traditions: the solemnity of the peasant figures which the Barbizon School made iconic in the mid nineteenth century, and the intensity of the paintings of domestic interiors by the seventeenth-century Dutch masters. *La femme de ménage* typifies the relatively conservative nature of Goodsir's early works, their restrained emotion and subdued tonality the legacy of the rigid academicism that Jean-Paul Laurens's teaching at Académie Julian had imparted. By the 1920s, however, her art would become less conventional as the theme of androgyny and a more complex form of expression attracted her attention.



Image 44 Agnes Goodsir *La femme de ménage*
(*The housekeeper*) 1905
Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 48 cm

Goodsir's portrayal of *La femme de ménage* reveals that she had absorbed a great deal from her study of European masterworks in the Louvre. Appropriating formal aspects of the paintings of artists such as Jean-François Millet and Johannes Vermeer (perhaps Millet's *La baratteuse* (*Woman churning*) c. 1866 and Vermeer's *The lacemaker* c. 1665–70), she modernised them to suit her own aesthetic reading. *La femme de ménage* is a decisive work because it foreshadows the direction Goodsir's art would take – the depiction of strong, self-possessed women in modish interiors, personified in the new androgynous image of the 1920s, signalling her feminist perspective on the emergent role of modern women in gaining

autonomy from the gendered boundaries imposed by patriarchal society.

Following a five-month trip to Australia, in 1906 Goodsir established herself in London where she remained until around 1920. Her motive for moving there is

unclear, but by 1905 her atelier training was complete and perhaps like Coates and Mackennal she saw the competitive artistic milieu of London as offering the greatest opportunity in obtaining work. With the termination of her annual stipend following the death of her father in 1906,³² some form of income from painting was now an imperative. As stated in Chapter 4, Australia and Britain shared a common nationality code whereby Australian citizens remained British subjects, which meant that Goodsir could work in London without restriction, an opportunity unavailable to her in Paris.³³

Following the example of Mackennal, Goodsir initially lived in St John's Wood, a bastion of artistic creativity, before moving in 1909 to neighbouring Maida Vale, a predominantly Jewish district with a swathe of red-brick mansion blocks newly built for the middle classes. Exemplifying the vagaries of economic survival as an expatriate artist, in 1909 Goodsir's stepmother died and Goodsir inherited a portion of her father's estate, which it seems protected her from any further hardships during the remaining three decades of her expatriatism.

Within a year of her arrival in London Goodsir exhibited with the newly formed Clifton Arts Club,³⁴ a group asserting a modernist approach and favouring artists who had studied or worked in France. In its early years the Club's exhibitions included loan works by artistic visionaries such as André Derain, Henri Matisse and Maurice de Vlaminck as well as the English modernisers Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and Paul Nash.³⁵ Its first president was Jacques-Emile Blanche who, with Bunny, would shortly open Atelier Blanche in Paris. As much at home in England as in France, Blanche visited London every year from 1884 with great success. Goodsir followed his example, effortlessly moving between London and Paris, especially in the late 1910s, exhibiting regularly in both cities before resettling permanently in Paris.

In connecting with the more progressive elements of British art Goodsir increasingly focused on the intrinsic qualities of painting, sensing that inherited notions of formal

³² See footnote 26.

³³ The proclamation of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* ended the arrangement in 1949.

³⁴ The Clifton Arts Club was founded in Bristol in 1906 and continues to operate there today.

³⁵ <http://www.cliftonartsclub.co.uk/History.html>, accessed 17 November 2014.

academic painting had become outdated in the new economic, social and political environment of an emerging industrialised world. Her approach contrasts markedly with that of Coates and Mackennal, who actively sought acceptance into the British establishment and its upholding of conventional values in art. Goodsir's Australian teacher, the bohemian Arthur Woodward, whose training advocated originality over traditionalism, also shaped her attitude,³⁶ which liberalism supported.

Goodsir's professed modernism was asserted through her embracement of socio-cultural trends, clearly evident in her advocacy of equal opportunities for women that grew out of the women's suffrage movement and in her own sexual orientation. Her activism in practising art as a profession rather than as a hobby, then the anticipated invisible role for women, her resolve to remain unmarried which challenged the accepted female role of wife and mother, and her decision to reposition herself in an international milieu that was usually the preserve of men are all indicators of her empowerment as a modern woman.



Image 45 Agnes Goodsir *Woman reading* c. 1915
Oil on canvas, 71 x 91.5 cm

In c. 1915 Goodsir painted *Woman reading*.³⁷ While its subject matter – the private, reflective and sequestered world of womanhood – is somewhat derivative, the deliberately pared-down composition, linear austerity and directness of Goodsir's approach are rather modern. The placement of the figure, seated and observed side-on

within a compressed unadorned interior, evokes the pose of the artist's mother in James Whistler's *Arrangement in grey and black no.1* 1871. Goodsir possibly saw the painting on one of her visits to the Musée du Luxembourg (where it was housed from 1891 to 1922) when living in Paris, and been inspired by its contrasting humility and innovation. In *Woman reading*, the rosary beads suspended on the wall,

³⁶ In Bendigo, Woodward initiated *en-plein-air* classes in addition to life drawing. His manner was often colourful and flamboyant, and his bohemian lifestyle was not lost on an admiring and enthusiastic Goodsir. See Tracy Cooper, pp. 3–4.

³⁷ Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, where the work is documented as having been painted in Paris. Goodsir, however, spent the war years in London,

in their simplest form a tool to aid prayer and meditation, suggest the woman may well be captured in rosary recitation and contemplation with the Bible as her *aide-mémoire*. From the viewpoint of Goodsir's feminism, where advocates are generally less religious, the thematic focus of this work is unusual.

The painting was completed during wartime in the very year that the sustained German bombing campaign by Zeppelin airships on central London began, causing catastrophic damage and tragic loss of life.³⁸ An inner city resident, Goodsir was affected emotionally by the raids.³⁹ Considered in this context, *Woman reading* could be a homage to the civilians as victims or more generally to the loss of life and injury occasioned by war, and to the countless victims, in this case perhaps a bereaved mother left behind. The mood and ambience of *Woman reading* are subdued; the woman appears reconciled with her situation as she gazes meditatively at the book.

After the First World War, Goodsir returned to Paris, adopting a lifestyle more sympathetic to her art practice from which a profound body of work developed, its focus being on her sexual orientation and gender identity.

Feminism and Lesbianism: Facilitators of Goodsir's French Assimilation

Goodsir's second period of expatriatism in Paris encompassed the interwar years from 1920 until her death in 1939 aged seventy-five. This was the heyday of modern art in Paris, and Montparnasse was its focus. Goodsir's permanent return there after an absence of fourteen years was almost certainly impelled by the freedom it allowed her to pursue her art and, importantly, her relationship with Rachel Dunn, who divorced Bernard Roelvink and moved to France to be with Goodsir.

In *London: The Biography* Peter Ackroyd argues that pre-1940s London was a male city. Women were,

³⁸ The most successful bombing, on 8 September 1915, blitzed central London, killing twenty-two people. This single attack caused more than half the material damage produced by all German raids against Britain in 1915.

³⁹ Goodsir's nephew Patrick Lorimer described the air raids in London as distressing his aunt and her subsequent journeys to places like Bedford in the east of England were to recover. See Karen Quinlan, *In a Picture Land over the Sea: Agnes Goodsir, 1864–1939* (Bendigo: Bendigo Art Gallery), 1998, p. 34.

the subordinate elements of a hierarchical and patriarchal society; in a city of power and business, they retain[ed] a supportive invisible presence ... were also marginalised and restricted ... the role generally imposed ... was that of the angel of the hearth, a domestic deity whose role as wife and mother was pre-eminent and inevitable.⁴⁰

In moving to Paris, a city where equality had been a significant aspect of life since the radical upheaval of the French Revolution, Goodsir and Dunn were able to engage freely with the city's egalitarian spirit. Here the couple sensed an openness and freedom encouraging of and sympathetic to their unconventional lifestyle. Twenty-one years younger than Goodsir, Dunn was also an expatriate, an American from small-town West Chester, near Philadelphia. We know from a pencil sketch of Dunn by Goodsir that the couple probably met in London around 1914, if not before.⁴¹ They became close friends, enjoying each other's company and travelling together. The intimate aspects of their relationship remain hidden by the natural discretion that characterised both women. In a letter penned during the war years, Goodsir's nephew Patrick Lorimer writes of Dunn, 'Cherry is very nice and quite one of the family. She is very much the style ... of course looking very young & loving "Goodie"'.⁴² This is the first authoritative reference to the woman who would play such an important part in Goodsir's life, becoming her model, confidant and lover.

We know from a catalogue entry of the annual Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts that by 1921 Goodsir and Dunn lived at 18 rue de l'Odéon.⁴³ Located on the Left Bank, near the Luxembourg Gardens, throughout the 1920s rue de l'Odéon was a centre of transatlantic enterprise. Eminent American expatriates residing there included the modernist composer George Antheil (no. 12); author, poet and publisher Robert McAlmon (no. 8); and the bookseller and publisher Sylvia Beach. Indeed, Beach and her French-poet partner Adrienne Monnier lived in the same apartment building as

⁴⁰ Peter Ackroyd, pp. 628–34

⁴¹ In a letter to Elsie Lorimer penned shortly after Goodsir's death in 1939, Rachel Dunn wrote: 'I am alone after 30 years', which suggests Goodsir and Dunn could have met as early as 1909 though Dunn may have been referring also to her time spent with Bernard Roelvink.

⁴² E. Anne Lorimer (ed.), *Patrick Lorimer: Letters from England and the Western Front, 1916–1919* (Sydney: Pergola), 1997, p. 254.

⁴³ Gaïte Dugnat, *Les Catalogues des Salons de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1901–25*, vol. VI (Dijon: L'Échelle de Jacob), 2002.

Goodsir and Dunn.⁴⁴ Through Beach and Monnier, the rue de l'Odéon became a place of intense intellectual and literary endeavour and debate.⁴⁵ From 1922 Beach's famous American bookstore Shakespeare and Company was located at no. 12 and became a gathering place for writers such as Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway and James Joyce, whose *Ulysses* was launched there in 1922. The American expatriates Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas lived a short distance from rue de l'Odéon and were familiar figures in the neighbourhood.⁴⁶ Through their respective friendships with Beach and Monnier, it is likely that Goodsir and Stein were acquaintances, especially given that both moved in similar artistic and lesbian circles.⁴⁷

From her home Goodsir could stroll through the Luxembourg Gardens, 'an oasis amongst the desert of activity and traffic, a landscape within the city that lured the



Image 46 Rachel Dunn and Agnes Goodsir, c. 1920

painters from their high roof-top studios to paint or to relax',⁴⁸ or along boulevard Saint Michel to the boulevard du Montparnasse, the artistic heart of the district. As Jean-Marie Drot described it: 'Within a very small area ... you could find bohemians, priests, students, mystics and ladies of easy virtue ... Before the outbreak of war in 1939, I remember sitting on the terrace of Le Dôme [Café] at certain times of the day and hearing every language in the world being spoken'.⁴⁹ Artists who are known to have lived in Montparnasse during the

⁴⁴ Virginie Raguénard, 'Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare & Company: A Mecca for contemporary literature', in *Literary Traveler*, posted on 17 April 2007, <http://www.literarytraveler.com/articles/shakespeare-company-paris/>, accessed 29 November 2014.

⁴⁵ From 1915 Adrienne Monnier ran a bookshop, La Maison des Amis des Livres at 7 rue de l'Odéon.

⁴⁶ From 1903–38 Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas lived at 27 rue de Fleurus on the western edge of the Luxembourg Gardens. Rue de l'Odéon was located on the northern edge and the couple often frequented it.

⁴⁷ Linda Simon, *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Doubleday), 1977, pp. 111–12.

⁴⁸ John Milner, p. 199.

⁴⁹ Jean-Marie Drot, *Les Heures Chaudes de Montparnasse (The Hot Hours in Montparnasse)* (Paris: Editions Hazan), 1995, p. 12. Established in 1898, Le Dôme Café, also widely known as the 'Anglo-American café', was renowned as an intellectual gathering place in Montparnasse. The famous and soon to be famous artists, writers, poets, art connoisseurs and dealers frequented it. Today it is an excellent fish restaurant.

1920s and 1930s when Goodsir resided in the adjacent Latin Quarter reads like a who's who of modern art: Constantin Brancusi, Alexander Calder, Giorgio di Chirico, Alberto Giacometti, Joan Miró, Piet Mondrian, Diego Rivera, Chaïm Soutine and Man Ray, among others.⁵⁰

For Goodsir the bohemianism, radical intellectualism and renowned gay and lesbian cultures of the Latin Quarter and Montparnasse offered freedoms that were impossible in London during the 1920s.⁵¹ Living among many foreign lesbians and with the relaxed and intimate company of Cherry, Goodsir quickly settled into Paris life. Many of these expatriates such as Gertrude Stein and the American feminist writer Natalie Barney held regular artistic and literary salons,⁵² which were a focus of the sixth *arrondissement* social calendar, bringing together writers and artists from around the world. Given Goodsir's lesbian connections, supported by contemporary photographs of her mixing socially with other gay women,⁵³ it may perhaps be assumed that she participated in these gatherings, which positioned her close to the centre of Parisian lesbian culture.



Image 47 Agnes Goodsir *Le chapeau bleu* (*Blue hat*) c. 1920
Oil on canvas, 91 x 73 cm

In her essay “‘Ezra through the open door’:
The parties of Natalie Barney, Adrienne
Monnier and Sylvia Beach as lesbian
modernist cultural production’ in *The
Modernist Party*, British cultural theorist
Joanne Winning explores the party as a
literary device and forum for developing
modernist creative values, opening up new
perspectives on networking, materiality, the
everyday and concepts of space, place and
time. She contends that the careful and

⁵⁰ Valérie Bougault, p. 205.

⁵¹ Florence Tamagne, *A History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919–1939* (New York: Algora), 2006, p. 20.

⁵² Gertrude Stein's famous Saturday evening salons, for example, brought together confluences of talent and thinking that would help define modernism in literature and art.

⁵³ See, for example, the photograph of Goodsir and Dunn socialising with female friends at St Valéry-en-Caux c. 1930, reproduced in Karen Quinlan, *The Long Weekend: Australian Artists in France, 1918–1939* (Bendigo: Bendigo Art Gallery), 2007, p. 51.

strikingly successful transformation of urban space – party space/time by Barney, Monnier and Beach in the service of lesbian modernist cultural production – into cultural space is inseparable from modernism.⁵⁴ Thus, it can be argued that as ‘party space’ the salons and other group gatherings held in the Latin Quarter became a significant conduit by which Goodsir established and disseminated intellectual and aesthetic authority in relation to modernism.

Echoing her mix of cultures, a hybrid of British, French and Australian, Goodsir’s paintings of this time reveal a fusion of artistic influences: modernism’s characteristic aesthetic introspection; a School of Paris focus on conventional subject matter, including portraiture, figure studies and still life; and an interest in the flat patterns and colouristic concerns of Japanese art. *Le chapeau bleu* (*Blue hat*),⁵⁵ a painting created most likely in late 1920 or early 1921 shortly after Goodsir’s arrival in Paris, manifests these various influences. An intermediate work, it unites formal aspects of British Edwardian portraiture with the opulence and *luxe* of contemporary French portrait painting. Edith Fry, the author of a series of important newspaper articles on Australian expatriates in Europe published in the London and Sydney press between 1914 and 1927, observes:

The vogue of the decorative portrait is something distinctively Parisian, which has influenced the figure work of almost all the Australian artists in Paris. If the influence of modern French ideas of portraiture can be traced in the earlier work of Rupert Bunny and the present day work of Bessie Davidson, it is more clearly manifest still in the portraits of Agnes Goodsir.⁵⁶

There is a similarity in feeling between *Le chapeau bleu* and Bunny’s semi-clothed women absorbed in musings and reveries in his ‘Feminine Arcady’ series from c. 1903–10 that focuses on femininity and the modernity and refinement of bourgeois Parisian life, which I examined in Chapter 2. Whereas Bunny’s imagery idealises modern women, Goodsir’s arouses sexual desire, the seductive off-the-shoulder

⁵⁴ Joanne Winning, “‘Ezra through the open door’: The parties of Natalie Barney, Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach as lesbian modernist cultural production’, in Kate McLoughlin (ed.), *The Modernist Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 2013, p. 163.

⁵⁵ Private collection, Orange, New South Wales.

⁵⁶ Edith Fry, ‘Australian artists in Paris’, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 18 March 1922, p. 7.

garments and French hair roll revealing the alluring neckline and enticing the viewer's gaze into intimate engagement with the subject of *Le chapeau bleu*.

Goodsir's approach was extremely daring for its time, given that naked flesh in relation to the female image, like that shown in *Le chapeau bleu*, was a subject linked almost exclusively to male artists and to relationships of sexual power and subordination.⁵⁷ Whereas Bunny worked within a male tradition of representation and employed 'masculine ways of seeing' the female nude, in *Le chapeau bleu* Goodsir adopted a distinctly feminine gaze as a privileged position intended for a female rather than a traditional male spectatorship. This is a painting about the female experience, directed towards 'women's pleasure in looking',⁵⁸ to quote British feminist scholar Rosemary Betterton, and perhaps even more specifically towards a lesbian audience given what we know of Goodsir's sexual inclination. Here Goodsir firmly places voyeurism in the feminine sphere. This type of image would soon be replaced with the subject of androgyny, signalling Goodsir's preoccupation with the independent modern woman and her own predilection for sexual ambiguity in gender identity.

Le chapeau bleu was one of two portraits (the other being *Cherry*) exhibited at the 1921 Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts.⁵⁹ 'The two best portraits in the Salon ... two portraits of women with a wealth of accessories of hangings and cushions, but both executed with a taste at once strong and delicate, which some men might envy', stated the French art historian Jean-Louis Vaudoyer in *L'Opinion*.⁶⁰ Goodsir would continue to show paintings of women annually at the New Salon until 1925 (she was elected an *associé* in 1924) and at the Salon des Indépendants till 1926. By then she was in her early sixties and beginning to suffer ill health, which accounts for the absence of her work at the Salons after that date.

Australian academic Elizabeth Ashburn maintains that Goodsir 'always remained

⁵⁷ Rosemary Betterton, pp. 3–5.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Gaïte Dugnat, cat. nos 534 and 535, respectively.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Edith Fry, 'Australasian artists in Europe', in the *British Australasian* (London), 8 September 1921, p. 46.

closeted'.⁶¹ Certainly she was much more covert in acknowledging her lesbianism publicly than, for example, the more provocative American expatriate painter Romaine Brooks. It is reasonable to suggest that Goodsir publicly engaged with feminist and lesbian circles in Paris, although with some hesitancy, gently overstepping the social and cultural conventions of her time. She utilised her transgressive identity to facilitate her assimilation into French culture, astutely working within a fluid milieu of 'masks and mirrors' where little was what it seemed. It brought her into contact with women of her own predilection – gay artists, writers and intellectuals – all of whom were part of Paris's vibrant artistic and literary milieu, where she felt a sense of belonging and interconnectedness.

The Australian academic Suzanne McLaren's research into the 'sense of belonging to layers of lesbian community' shows that high levels of a sense of belonging, especially in the organisational and friendship layers, are particularly protective and welcoming.⁶² The organisational layer of group participation like the weekly private salons brought Goodsir into contact with lesbians and artists who had a shared interest or proximity. The friendship layer, her relationship with Cherry and a personal network of friends, provided Goodsir with support and acceptance of herself as a 'whole' person, including her status as an expatriate artist, which along with her lesbianism mediated an important dynamic between self-identity and group or community identity. Her commitment to art represented a common bond of experience at least as strong as her sexual orientation.

The Androgynous Muse: Portrayals of 'Cherry'

Artists have portrayed same-sex lovers throughout history, from the ancient Greeks and Romans to the Siberian shamans and Native American two-spirit medicine men to more recent practitioners such as Francis Bacon and Robert Mapplethorpe; but these representations have been mainly constructed from the male perspective. Indeed, the evidence suggests that imagery of same-sex love or same-sex lovers by

⁶¹ Elizabeth Ashburn, 'Agnes Goodsir', in Claude J. Summers (ed.), *The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts* (San Francisco: Cleis Press Inc.), 2004, p. 159.

⁶² Suzanne McLaren, 'Sense of belonging to layers of lesbian community weakens the link between body image dissatisfaction and depressive symptoms', in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (London: Sage Publications Ltd), 24 February 2014, open access journal, accessed on 24 November 2014.

female artists is uncommon. The portrayal of sexual relations between women in Goodsir's lifetime is more visible in literature, such as in the writings of Natalie Barney, Colette and Radclyffe Hall, who in 1928 wrote the important lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* which made 'sexual inversion' a subject of household conversation for the first time.

In the final adjustment phase of Goodsir's assimilation, the development of feelings of belonging – to place, to the local artistic milieu, and to lesbian culture consistent with Gérard Bouchard's concept of interculturalism – led to a greater sense of wellbeing, which in the progressive ambience of Paris empowered her to acknowledge her relationship with Rachel Dunn, even if subtly, through her art. There were contemporary exemplars for Goodsir to follow or at least identify with within the Latin Quarter, the painter Romaine Brooks and fellow American Natalie Barney being the most well known. Although Barney practised and advocated non-monogamy, her relationship with Brooks was enduring and lasted more than fifty years despite its volatility.⁶³

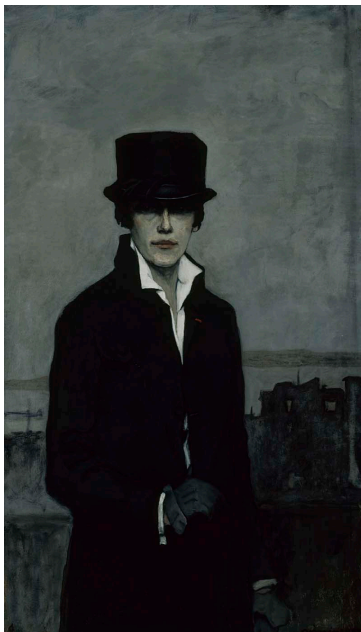


Image 48 Romaine Brooks
Autoportrait (Self-portrait) 1923
Oil on canvas, 117.5 x 68.5 cm

Brooks and Barney met around 1914 at about the same time Goodsir befriended Dunn in London. Brooks was at the forefront in defining contemporary lesbian and butch identities through crafting an androgynous appearance, which was strengthened by her masculine modes of dress. She provocatively made her sexuality visible to others and openly challenged conventional ideas of womanhood. Like Dunn Brooks was a divorcee, stylish and charismatic, while Barney, not unlike Goodsir, was plain-featured.

Like Goodsir, Brooks specialised in portraiture and employed the image of her partner, although not as the major focus as Goodsir did. Brooks's subjects were mostly drawn from Barney's

⁶³ Suzanne Rodriguez, *Wild Heart: A Life – Natalie Clifford Barney's Journey from Victorian America to the Literary Salons of Paris* (New York: Harper Collins), 2002, pp. 295–301.

social circle, usually women of accomplishment, independence and wealth. She consistently used her trademark palette of blacks, whites and greys (her tones and hues were similar to those of Whistler, whom she admired) to define the image of her own class and sexuality, the well-heeled lesbian in a masculinised femininity.

Autoportrait (Self-portrait) 1923⁶⁴ is Brooks's most celebrated work and epitomises the androgynous character of the women she portrayed. Here Brooks depicted herself in the dark colours of a man's outfit, her eyes veiled under the shadow of the hat brim. The shadowed face, a pictorial strategy also adopted by Goodsir in her portrayals of Cherry, suggests that her true self is hidden behind a carefully constructed façade. The portrait is ambiguous, a woman of extreme confidence coupled with fear of vulnerability. The tiny flash of red on Brooks's lapel represents the ribbon of the Legion of Honour for her service to France.⁶⁵ Red as a symbolic colour has several meanings. It is the colour of energy and sexuality, and here it could allude to the secret passions of Brooks's personal life.

The earliest identified work of Cherry by Goodsir is a pencil sketch from the immediate post-war period done in London. The subject was in her early thirties and Goodsir depicted her seated and from side-on, her left arm propping up her head and her gaze direct and unwavering. Cherry's attire is stiffly formal and a small-rimmed hat conceals her smart coiffure. Goodsir's portrayal is nonspecific, a representation of the everywoman. There is certainly no intimation of attachment or closeness between the subject and the artist, although this was to change in subsequent portrayals. Here, Goodsir accentuated what twentieth-century German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer termed 'occasionality': the 'relationship between the portrait image and the human original ... a deliberate allusion to the original that is not a product of the viewer's interpretation but of the portraitist's intention'.⁶⁶

The 1920s were the most productive of Goodsir's career. During this period she produced the major body of work, the *muse androgyne*, focusing on images of Cherry. The majority of the paintings were completed between c. 1922 and 1926, when Goodsir was in her late fifties or early sixties and Cherry in her late thirties to

⁶⁴ Collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.

⁶⁵ Brooks received the Legion of Honour for her fund-raising efforts during the First World War.

⁶⁶ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1991, p. 7.

early forties, the mature phase of Goodsir's creativity and a time of an increased sense of self and established confidence for her partner. Goodsir rarely identified her subject by name when titling works, apart from two paintings simply called *Cherry* completed in 1923 and 1925. Like George Coates she used generic titles – *Femme à la cigarette* (*Woman smoking*), *The Parisienne* and *Type de Quartier Latin* (*Type of the Latin Quarter*) and so on, perhaps at the behest of her partner or probably because it enabled her to focus on more abstract and intangible aspects of Cherry's identity. In Coates's portraits ambiguity shaped the sitter's self-projection and disrupted the viewer's gaze, creating a mystique around the sitter's identity which Goodsir also acknowledged as part of the authority of the likeness. Extant photographs of Cherry confirm that these generalised painted portraits are indeed representations of her. The clues are to be found in the translucent eyes, sharp nose, high cheekbones and chic three-quarter-cropped bob haircut that she adopted in the 1920s. Cherry was stylishly feminine, yet with an enticingly boyish allure, the converse of Goodsir's stoutly mannish appearance. The couple in a sense typified the 'butch and femme' dyad used to describe individual gender identities in present-day lesbian and gay cultures. Whether their partnership was organised around this dyadic system remains speculation, but as highly creative individuals they probably would have rebuked stereotyping.

I have chosen to focus on five works from the *muse androgyne* series – *Femme à la cigarette* (*Woman smoking*) 1922, *Cherry* 1923, *The Parisienne* c. 1924, *Woman with a cigarette* c. 1925 and *Type de Quartier Latin* (*Type of the Latin Quarter*) c. 1926⁶⁷ – to demonstrate Goodsir's enhanced sense of sexual autonomy following her move to Paris. Painted when Cherry was in the prime of life, these compositions capture the image of an arresting and modish 'new woman', a term popularised by the American expatriate writer Henry James in books such as *Daisy Miller* (1879) and *Portrait of a Lady* (1881). According to the American historian Ruth Bordin, the

⁶⁷ *Femme à la cigarette* (*Woman smoking*) is in a French private collection. In Karen Quinlan's catalogue *In a Picture Land Over the Sea ...* (p. 49), the work is dated c. 1925, but I have re-dated it 1922, when it was exhibited in the annual Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (cat. no. 432). I have also assigned a new date, 1923, to *Cherry*, since it was included in the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (cat. no. 834) that year. In Quinlan's catalogue (pp. 41 and 69) it is incorrectly dated '1924'. I have retitled *Girl with cigarette* in the collection of the Bendigo Art Gallery. Cherry was aged forty when Goodsir painted this image of her; hence, I have renamed it *Woman with a cigarette*, which links with Goodsir's earlier titling of *Femme à la cigarette*.

term 'new woman' was,

intended by him to characterise American expatriates living in Europe; women of affluence and sensitivity, who despite or perhaps because of their wealth exhibited an independent spirit and were accustomed to acting on their own. The term New Woman always referred to women who exercised control over their own lives, be it personal, social or economic.⁶⁸

Certainly Rachel Dunn fitted James's archetype – an American expatriate, individualistic and liberated; and in divorcing Bernard Roelvink exercising control over her life. Although her financial position is unknown, one can assume that she was a woman of independent means given that she and Goodsir lived comfortably together in Paris.



Image 49 Agnes Goodsir *Femme à la cigarette (Woman smoking)* 1922
Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown

In these five works and in *Femme à la cigarette* and *Type de Quartier Latin* especially, Goodsir presents the image of Cherry as sexually ambiguous. Whether Cherry espoused androgyny as part of her gender identity is uncertain, but it can be assumed from Goodsir's portrayals that she did not see herself as fitting neatly into the typical feminine role.⁶⁹ Photographs of the couple taken in the 1920s and early 1930s reveal Goodsir as having physical and behavioural androgynous traits with a high degree of masculine,

instrumental attributes, while Dunn's androgynous persona suggests more feminine, expressive traits. Dunn may not have actually defined herself as androgynous but have adapted her physical appearance to look that way, perhaps as a fashion statement.

⁶⁸ Ruth Bordin, *Alice Freeman Palmer: The Evolution of a New Woman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1993, p. 2.

⁶⁹ According to the American psychologist Sandra Bem's gender schema theory, core gender identity is related to the sex typing that an individual undergoes. Childhood experiences, schooling, the media and other forms of cultural transmission can heavily influence this typing. Bem identifies four gender role orientations in which an individual may fall: masculine, feminine, androgynous and undifferentiated. Androgynous individuals process and integrate traits and information from both genders.

In the *muse androgyne* series, the unique relationship between the artist and sitter privileges an ‘exclusively prescribed’ interconnection, a closeness or sense of intimacy between Goodsir and Dunn (whose gaze is focused explicitly on the painter) that mediates the viewer’s involvement in the portrait transaction. British art historian Joanna Woodall’s characterisation of the nature of the relationship between artist and sitter is particularly apt here when she notes in her introduction to *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* that:

In modernism portraiture still stands as the yardstick for communication and truth and at the juncture between the related discourses of the sitter and the artist, which constitute the reflected, reflective subject ... the sitter is not the passive object of the artist’s active subjectivity. The portrait involves a perpetual oscillation between artist and sitter, observer and observed. This ultimately fuses into a composite representation of identity.⁷⁰

The only existing image of *Femme à la cigarette* 1922 is a small black and white catalogue reproduction published in 1998.⁷¹ Cherry’s authority as Goodsir’s ‘inspiring goddess’ is implied in the image of her face, its binary schism into an illuminated left and a shadowy right side (a disjunction also apparent in *The Parisienne*, *Type de Quartier Latin* and *Woman with a cigarette*) evoking dual aspects of her complex identity – that of the authentic Cherry as companion and lover, contrasted with her contrived self as the androgynous muse. This duality also connects with the feminine and masculine sides of her personality embodied in the notion of androgyny. The partially shadowed face could also be indicative of a reluctance to reveal the identity of the sitter fully, something also suggested by the generic title of the work. Although there was some acceptance of lesbianism in Paris, there would still have been hesitation about expressing it openly. Goodsir’s reticence about the identity of her subject could be indicative of this.

An alternative reading of the partly darkened face in *Femme à la cigarette* implicates Goodsir. Perhaps this binary denotes the disparity between her past constrained life in rural Australia and her existing liberated and liberating life in Paris? Moreover,

⁷⁰ Joanna Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 1997, p. 21.

⁷¹ The painting is reproduced in Karen Quinlan, p. 49.

possibly Goodsir glimpsed in the younger Cherry something of herself or her imagined self. Shortly after the artist's death in 1939 Dunn wrote, 'I am alone after 30 years. She was my mother, my friend and in the last years when she was ill so much like my child'.⁷² Perhaps Goodsir also saw in Cherry something of the child, literally and metaphorically, especially given their considerable age difference and her close, protective attachment.

As expatriates Goodsir and Dunn were far removed from family and entirely reliant on each other, their truncated familial situation integral to their French assimilation into their adopted culture. Dunn's American connections would have been helpful in acquainting the couple with the large American expatriate community then living in Paris, including its sizeable gay population in the Latin Quarter, with which they mixed. But ultimately they were dependant on each other, an intimacy that is disclosed in photographs of them together and also inferred in the *muse androgyne* paintings. This 'presence of absence' is suggested through the ambiguous way in which Cherry is portrayed, revealing a certain vulnerability beyond her apparent composure. This is especially evident in *Femme à la cigarette* and *Woman with a cigarette*, where the sitter appears exposed within her state of pensiveness.

In the painting *Cherry* 1923⁷³ the sitter's eyes are almost concealed in the deep shadow cast by the brim of the hat, an effect heightened by her predilection for heavily outlining her eyes in kohl, which had come into vogue.⁷⁴ The soft yellowish background and lively flecks of red and blue in the scarf moderate the exceptional blackness of the portrait. Black represents the absence of colour, but Goodsir has used it as a 'colour' in its own right, not unlike Edouard Manet's *Berthe Morisot with a bunch of violets* 1872,⁷⁵ which is greatly enhanced by his superb and profuse use of black. Like Morisot, Cherry is dressed almost entirely in black with a matching hat, the embodiment of elegance and sophistication. As Goodsir understood, black can signify concealment and solitude and thus create an air of ambiguity and uncertainty. In psychological terms black conceals weaknesses and insecurities and offers

⁷² Quoted in Karen Quinlan, p. 64.

⁷³ Collection of the Glenelg Shire Council, Portland, Victoria.

⁷⁴ Kohl is an ancient eye cosmetic used to contour or darken the eyelids and as mascara for the eyelashes. It is still widely used in South Asia, the Middle East and parts of Africa.

⁷⁵ Collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

protection from the external, creating a barrier between itself and the outside world. In this context *Cherry* could be seen as an image about interiority, relating to her inner being as well as reflecting the inner character of the artist.

Goodsir's focus on the interior space both in portraiture and paintings of figures in interiors and of still lifes may well have been a suppressed response to her hesitancy about openly declaring her lesbianism in her work. This approach contrasts with that of Ethel Carrick, whose position as a married woman and later as a widow authorised her to move freely in a more accommodating exterior space, the thematic focus of her art. The social stigma attached to being unmarried in an age when marriage was the normal and expected role for middle-class women like Goodsir was immense. Along with other single women, she was regarded as a social failure and treated with pity and contempt. Legal documents identified her as a spinster, considered unlikely to marry, which impeded her assimilation within society.



**Image 50 Agnes Goodsir *The Parisienne*
c. 1924
Oil on canvas, 61 x 50 cm**

For Goodsir, the obstacles of being a single woman radically shaped her expatriatism, possibly obligating her as an advocate of equal rights and opportunities for women to press the case in her art. In *The Parisienne* c. 1924⁷⁶ she captures a sense of Parisian style, combining theatricality with elegant restraint. Cherry is placed against a muted cream background, a space emptied of all but the painting in the upper-left corner which the artist cropped *à la* Japanese style. The sitter emanates a sense of sweeping modernity. Modishly dressed in a masculine-style high-collared jacket with a contemporary flapper's cloche hat, she casually holds a cigarette, perhaps the brand known as *Parisienne*,⁷⁷ a sign of liberation and equality with men. In the early twentieth century, the cigarette became

⁷⁶ Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

⁷⁷ *Parisienne* is a Swiss brand of cigarette. It was popular in France and also internationally during the 1920s.

a symbolic ‘torch of freedom’⁷⁸ representing an egalitarian cause, which as a smoker and feminist Goodsir abetted. The androgynous ‘new woman’ portrayed in *The Parisienne* could have been spotted in the streets, cafes and bars of the Latin Quarter during the 1920s. Her pearly skin and deeply rouged lips betray her almost boyish, youthful demeanour, which her trendy, slender, flat-chested body accentuates. The sitter’s hands are relaxed and each bears the glint of a ring, perhaps indicating past and present lives, including Goodsir’s subtle presence.

The ring reappears as a symbol in *Type de Quartier Latin* c. 1926,⁷⁹ perhaps the most masculine of the *muse androgyne* images. Defying social norms of dress by portraying Cherry in a fashionable Burberry trench coat and fedora (adopted by the women’s rights movement as a symbol) Goodsir created an image focusing jointly on the sitter as the androgynous muse and the emancipator from male dominance, outwardly parodying old-fashioned patriarchy from a feminist perspective. She invites the viewer to move beyond mere surface appearance and to reflect on gender and culture, which prescribe the sitter’s adopted identity. Here, the artist and the sitter collude in a transaction privileging the ‘other’ – the androgyne, the ambiguous gender combining stereotypically male and female attributes.

Type de Quartier Latin authorises the viewer to reflect on existentialist ideas relating to androgyny such as the sense of curiosity and gratification, awareness of the inescapability of public scrutiny, and the inevitability of exclusion that departure from the norm often creates. The extent to which Goodsir and Dunn were mindful of these concerns is unknown, but their unconventional lesbian lifestyle would have been unfamiliar to most Parisians and sightseers who travelled into the Latin Quarter. For many, the spectacle of gay couples or homosexual groups would have been an unusual experience, much as it is today for the unwary tourist stumbling upon the popular gay bars, cruise clubs and restaurants concentrated in Le Marais. The

⁷⁸ ‘Torches of freedom’ was a phrase used to encourage women’s smoking by exploiting female aspirations for a better life during the women’s liberation movement in the United States. The term was first employed by psychoanalyst Abraham Brill when describing the natural desire for women to smoke and was used by public relations analyst Edward Bernays to encourage women to smoke in public despite social taboos. Bernays hired women to march while smoking their ‘torches of freedom’, in the New York Easter Sunday Parade of 1929, which was a significant moment for fighting social barriers for women smokers.

⁷⁹ The painting is in an unknown Australian private collection.

American feminist academic Naomi McCormick claims that men have constructed women's sexuality and that the male public gaze has generally frowned upon lesbian sexual orientation.⁸⁰ This attitude was exacerbated during Goodsir's time by the prevailing patriarchal structure of society, even in Paris where masculine authority was outwardly more receptive to egalitarian values. Goodsir thought highly of *Type de Quartier Latin*, shipping it along with three other paintings to Sydney for inclusion in the exhibition '150 Years of Australian Art', shown at the (National) Art Gallery of New South Wales in early 1938. The work went unnoticed, perhaps because it did not embrace an identifiable genre like the agrarian values of Australian nationalist art, with the Gallery acquiring her more conservative *The Chinese skirt*.⁸¹



Image 51 Agnes Goodsir *Type de Quartier Latin* (*Type of the Latin Quarter*) c. 1926
Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm

The retitled *Woman with a cigarette* c. 1925⁸² (see footnote 67) is Goodsir's most celebrated painting. It captures the image of Cherry in a relaxed and reflective pose, perhaps seated in a café, at the home of a friend or in their apartment on rue de l'Odéon. Her attention is focused intently on the artist in an ocular interchange suggesting a warm and familiar connection. Casually dressed in a knitted sweater and a lavish shawl over her shoulders, and a flapper hat partly concealing her radical bob cut, the subject

calmly holds a cigarette, a sign of rebellious independence, glamour and sexual allure for fashionable women, including feminists and flappers intent on flouting conventional standards of behaviour in the 1920s.⁸³ Like *The Parisienne* and *Type de Quartier Latin*, in this work Goodsir portrays Cherry as the cultural archetype of the dynamic 'new woman' exerting her autonomy by pushing the limits set by male-

⁸⁰ Naomi McCormack, *Sexual Salvation: Affirming Women's Sexual Rights and Pleasures* (Westport: Praeger Publishers), 1994, pp. 60–61.

⁸¹ B. G. M. 'Picture by Agnes Goodsir', in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 1 December 1938, p. 26.

⁸² Collection of the Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo.

⁸³ Allan M. Brandt, *The Cigarette Century* (New York: Basic Books), 2007, p. 57.

dominated society, an unthinkable image for the high arts or from a women's hand a generation earlier.⁸⁴

Stylistically *Woman with a cigarette* has affinities with the Nabis aesthetic and with Japonisme. We sense their influence in Goodsir's use of an asymmetrical composition, the angular treatment of perspective and the cropped partial views of objects such as the table in the foreground, the chair, and the picture affixed to the wall behind the figure. The inclusion of the Japanese fan and focus on other singularly decorative objects such as the porcelain cup and saucer, lampshade, and Cherry's richly patterned shawl also indicate that the craze for oriental art and design that swept France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had deeply affected Goodsir's aesthetic.⁸⁵ The simple uniform space accentuated by the stretches of patterned wallpaper and tablecloth is further evidence that the artist was well acquainted with Japonaiserie.



Image 52 Agnes Goodsir *Woman with a cigarette* c. 1925
Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm

The five paintings examined from the *muse androgyne* series reveal as much about Goodsir as they do about their subject, Rachel Dunn. They provide an intimate glimpse into a remarkable friendship that challenged prevailing attitudes to gender equality and sexuality in the 1920s. These portraits transpose the image of Cherry from the private to the public sphere and thus reassign her constructed identity to the social context. This perspective allows us to see the *muse androgyne* in a new light, recognising the strength and courage of women like

Goodsir and Dunn in striving to break down the boundaries of gender inequality and sexuality in the early twentieth century. The *androgynous muse* is a bold declaration

⁸⁴ Joan Kerr rightly identified the importance of this image in Australian representation of female lives in Joan Kerr and Anita Callaway (eds), *Heritage: The National Women's Art Book* (Sydney: Craftsman House), 1995, p. 47.

⁸⁵ We know from contemporary photographs that Goodsir and Dunn included oriental objects in the decoration of their Paris apartment.

of that struggle and also of how art can be exercised for the social and moral good.

Goodsir's Achievements

Goodsir's achievements have been mostly measured within the context of 'women's art' rather than Australian art more broadly. Examples include 'Project 21: Women's Images of Women' (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1977); 'Modern Australian Women: Paintings and Prints, 1925–1945' (Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000) and 'Slow Burn: A Century of Australian Women Artists from a Private Collection' (S H. Ervin Gallery, 2010). Exhibitions such as 'The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires' and 'Face: Australian Portraits, 1880–1960', organised by the National Gallery of Australia in 2004 and 2010 respectively, have acknowledged Goodsir within a wider context. Recent narratives around feminist and lesbian ideologies have also acknowledged Goodsir's influence, with Peter Di Sciascio's 'Australian lesbian artists of the early twentieth century' in Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett's *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI* (2011) adding a new assessment from the perspective of her sexual identity.⁸⁶ In 1998 the Bendigo Art Gallery presented 'In a Picture Land over the Sea: Agnes Goodsir, 1864–1939', the first retrospective and most exhaustive study to date.⁸⁷

In 1927, in the twilight of her career, Goodsir returned to Australia for major exhibitions in Melbourne and Sydney.⁸⁸ The press reviews were mixed. The Melbourne *Herald* art critic J. S. MacDonald wrote, 'Technically she is well enough equipped ... Extreme modern movements, in the thick of which Miss Goodsir lives, have not at all harmed her ... She is au fait with all of them, but not to be misled'.⁸⁹ Writing in the *Home* monthly, H. H. Fotheringham also reflected local conservatism: 'The principal quality of Miss Goodsir's work was a quality of restraint for which, of

⁸⁶ Peter Di Sciascio, 'Australian lesbian artists of the early twentieth century', in Yorick Smaal and Graham Willett (eds) *Out Here: Gay and Lesbian Perspectives VI* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing), 2011, pp. 135–55.

⁸⁷ The exhibition was shown at the Bendigo Art Gallery from 9 May–7 June 1998 and then toured to eight Australian regional galleries from 21 June 1998–6 June 1999. It comprised seventy-three paintings and drawings spanning the period 1893–1937.

⁸⁸ The exhibitions were shown at the Fine Art Society's Gallery, Melbourne from 18–30 May 1927 and the Macquarie Galleries, Sydney from 28 June–9 July 1927. The catalogue of the latter exhibition lists fifty oil paintings and fourteen watercolours, including *Woman (Girl) with a cigarette* (cat. no. 1, 200 guineas) and *The Parisienne* (cat. no. 21, 45 guineas).

⁸⁹ *Herald* (Melbourne), 17 May 1927, quoted in Karen Quinlan, p. 14.

course, we should be grateful, as we are when we recollect the extravagance of some of Europe's artistic excesses'.⁹⁰ The commentator for the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted the 'remarkable strength and vigour allied with a rich colour sense [and] the fidelity with which character has been portrayed in faces beneath heavy shadows'.⁹¹ Goodsir's last exhibition was held at the Cooling Galleries in central London in May 1938,⁹² a year before her death, but there are no further details.

Goodsir did not achieve the international acclaim of Rupert Bunny or Bertram Mackennal, or even of John Russell and George Coates; her gender worked against her in an art world shaped by masculinity. In 1924 she was elected an *associé* and in 1926 a *sociétaire* of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts,⁹³ the second Australian woman to achieve membership, which she considered one of the highpoints of her career.⁹⁴ Like many women artists of her generation, Goodsir was the exemplary quiet achiever.

Revealing what South Australian artist Dorrit Black described as a 'modified form of conservative modernism', Goodsir's paintings derived from Post-Impressionism's legacy as it unfolded through various developments in art in London and Paris during the first decades of the twentieth century. But if one looks beyond artistic conventions one discovers in their making a subjective approach that was quite radical for its time. In its subtext, the *muse androgyne* reflects new attitudes to gender and sexuality, which in 1920s Paris were some of the most progressive in the world. In this sense it may be argued that Goodsir's greatest achievement lay in representing one of the most important sociological developments of the period, the new androgynous image, which the paintings of a modish Cherry personify. Her paintings reveal 'lived experience', the indissoluble bond between the artist and subject which went beyond conventional portraiture. They are as progressive in their representation as a Margaret Preston portrait of flowers or a Grace Crowley portrait

⁹⁰ *Home* (Sydney), 1 August 1927, quoted in Karen Quinlan, p. 14.

⁹¹ 'Art exhibition. Miss Goodsir's paintings', in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 28 June 1927, p. 12.

⁹² The exhibition 'Paintings by the Australian Artist, Agnes Goodsir' was shown at the Cooling Galleries, London, from 10–23 May 1938.

⁹³ B. G. M. 'Picture by Agnes Goodsir', op. cit. p. 26.

⁹⁴ Rupert Bunny (in 1904) and E. Phillips Fox (1907) were the first Australians and Bessie Davidson (in 1922) was the first Australian female artist to gain membership.

study.

Summary

Expatriatism liberated Goodsir from Australian insularism. The atelier-style training received in Bendigo encouraged her to go abroad, and like most students of the post-1880s generation she was drawn to London and Paris, where she eventually settled. Her early years in Paris were spent at various well-known ateliers, their instruction providing a firm foundation for her art. A subsequent fifteen-year period in London strengthened Goodsir's commitment to painting, with portraiture emerging as the dominant mode. In an interview for the *British-Australasian* newspaper in 1906, with reference to several paintings facing her, Goodsir proclaimed, 'You must forgive my enthusiasm; it means just everything to me. Nothing else is of the smallest or faintest importance beside that'.⁹⁵

In London Goodsir met Rachel Dunn, who became her lifetime companion and muse. In due course they moved to Paris, residing in the Latin Quarter, then a renowned haven for foreign gays and lesbians and offering freedoms unattainable in London. With its relaxed *laissez-faire* atmosphere, this milieu assisted Goodsir's assimilation into French culture. From the early 1920s Goodsir worked on a series of paintings presenting Dunn as its focus, the *muse androgyne*, a confident expression of the life they shared as self-possessed women deeply engaging with a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Goodsir appointed Dunn executor of her estate. In 1947, eight years after her death, Dunn shipped several of Goodsir's paintings to Daryl Lindsay, then director of the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne for distribution to various Australian galleries. This prescient act of generosity allows us to appreciate Goodsir's work beyond the European context in which it was created, and to value its significance for Australian art, to which it is strongly connected.

⁹⁵ 'Interview with Miss Agnes Goodsir', in the *British Australasian* (London), 6 December 1906, p.11.

Chapter 7: Ethel Carrick – Inverting the ‘Spaces of Femininity’: Painting the World of Women in Public Outdoor Places

Introduction

Unlike the other five case studies, Ethel Carrick was English born and educated, but nonetheless she became Australian through her marriage to the acclaimed Melbourne painter E. Phillips Fox¹ and extended visits to Australia in the 1910s, 1930s and 1940s.² Commentators on Australian art have traditionally and almost invariably portrayed her as living and working in the shadow of Fox,³ but she was a remarkably independent woman whose art maintains its distinctiveness and stands apart from Fox’s work. Expatriatism in progressive Paris empowered Carrick to pursue her modernist agenda with fewer restrictions than Agnes Goodsir, the consequence of her position as a married woman (unlike Goodsir’s socially disadvantageous unattached status), and an artist-husband who was sympathetic to her situation. These freedoms authorised Carrick through painting to challenge contemporary gender relations, employing motifs such as urban parks, markets and beaches (traditionally male territories) peopled with women to invert the gendered traditions of the feminine and masculine spheres. French expatriatism brought to Carrick’s art a radical new perspective, the representation of modern femininity in an outdoor social context revealed in vibrant paintings capturing the *joie de vivre* of La Belle Époque.

Initially, I explore how Carrick’s English art training became an important catalyst for her French expatriatism, which she embarked on shortly after marrying Fox in 1905 and which made it easier for her to travel abroad. I then examine the artistic partnership between Carrick and Fox, a ‘creative coupling’ not unlike that of George Coates and Dora Meeson in London, where a state of comparative equilibrium authorised each of the painters to pursue their art independently. Couple collaboration assisted Carrick’s assimilation into the Parisian artistic milieu, a life of

¹ Carrick and Fox married on 9 May 1905 at St Peter’s Church, Ealing in London.

² Carrick visited Australia in 1908, 1913–16, 1939–45, 1948–50 and 1952.

³ The available literature suggests Carrick probably worked no differently from any other wife-husband artistic couple. The ‘shadow’ myth chiefly stems from gendered interpretations of Carrick as the female and thus the subordinate and submissive entity in the partnership. Confident, independent and outspoken, she was Fox’s equal in art and life, an aspect that most (predominantly male) cultural commentators (William Moore, Robert Hughes, Bernard Smith, Sasha Grishin et al) have failed to acknowledge.

mutual influence fostering her career.

A brief account of Georges-Eugène Haussmann's massive mid-nineteenth century urban renewal program, giving rise to new boulevards, apartment buildings and public spaces in Paris, establishes the context for my examination of Carrick's interest in urban parks and markets as contested spaces for exploration through painting. Haussmann's initiative signalled modern urbanism for Parisians, and the Impressionists pioneered it as a major narrative in their art.

British art historian Griselda Pollock's research into the female Impressionist painter Berthe Morisot's gendered response to public outdoor spaces is next examined. Despite their thematic inventiveness, Morisot's paintings of public gardens and boating scenes strengthen the established notion of the 'spaces of femininity', their structuring endorsing the boundaries imposed by social forces. In contrast, a generational change in women's rights sanctioned Carrick, as the 'invisible *flâneuse*',⁴ to paint public outdoor space as autonomous and non-gendered. Her little-known painting *Corrida à Biarritz (Bullfight at Biarritz)* c. 1908⁵ is analysed to support this claim.

A group of eight paintings, completed for the most part between 1906 and c. 1912 but also including two from c. 1926, is next examined to demonstrate how Carrick employed 'spatial inversion' to paint the world of women in newly contested public outdoor spaces. Carrick's feminist and modernist propensities as well as her assimilated identity, merging British with Australian and French influences, abetted this unconventional approach. I conclude with a summary of Carrick's achievements, which were significant given that she was widowed early (aged forty-three) and like Agnes Goodsir compelled to pursue painting on her own in a profession that remained strongly patriarchal and therefore prejudicial throughout her career.

Carrick's English Art Training: A Catalyst for Her French Expatriatism

Like most single middle-class women of her generation, Carrick was educated at

⁴ See Janet Wolff, 'The invisible *flâneuse*: Women and the literature of modernity', in *Theory, Culture and Society* (London: Sage), vol. 2 no. 3, 1985, pp. 37–46.

⁵ Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

home in Uxbridge, a small town on the western outskirts of London, in a family environment sympathetic to the arts. Her initial art instruction was under Francis Bate, who had trained in France and was a champion of English Impressionism and the New English Art Club.⁶ Both were a focus for all that was adventurous in contemporary English art, and Bate's teaching acquainted Carrick with a modern painting style that would soon have considerable influence on her career. He encouraged his pupils to paint *en plein air*, to use a brighter palette than was currently acceptable and to treat the subject broadly and simply without any preconceived notion of style.⁷ By the standards of the Royal Academy, where high Victorian narrative and moralistic painting still graced the exhibition walls at Burlington House, Bate's teaching was unusually progressive. Most literature on Carrick fails to acknowledge the importance of his influence, but it was decisive in connecting her with modern French art.



Image 53 Ethel Carrick, c. 1912

From 1898 to 1903 Carrick studied at London's Slade School of Fine Art under Frederick Brown and Henry Tonks. Fellow case study John Russell had been a Slade student fourteen years earlier, but his study was intermittent, perhaps due to his failure to settle and embrace the local artistic milieu. Carrick's Britishness worked in her favour, the Slade's practices and traditions having a common and familiar resonance for her. Brown was a founder of the New English Art Club, which placed him in the vanguard of British painting.⁸ He had also trained in Paris, his portraiture bearing the shared influences of his study at Académie Julian and Jules Bastien-Lepage's naturalistic style.⁹ Tonks too had savoured the French experience, embarking on numerous painting excursions in France during the early 1900s. A formidable draughtsman, Tonks's drawing style was Degas-inspired, using his interpretative line

⁶ Francis Bate ran a private studio at Brook Green in London. He was one of ten artists who showed in the first and only London Impressionists' exhibition held at the Goupil Gallery, London in December 1889 under the aegis of Walter Sickert. The London Impressionists were a powerful element within the New English Art Club, of which Bate was Honorary Secretary.

⁷ Frances Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1980, p. 31.

⁸ Dennis Farr, *English Art 1870–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1978, p. 30.

⁹ Ibid.

to model form in refreshingly unlaboured sketches. Through the joint influences of the teaching of Brown and Tonks, the receptiveness of students like Carrick to early English and French modernism grew and flourished in the same aestheticism at the Slade.¹⁰ Her presence at the summer classes of the *plein-air* painting school run by the British painters Julius Olsson and Algernon Talmage at the artist's colony of St Ives in Cornwall in 1901 (where she most likely first met Fox)¹¹ corroborated her commitment to the Impressionist aesthetic and to painting as an imaginative and experimental medium.

During her time at the Slade or shortly thereafter Carrick painted *Pumpkin sellers* c. 1903-04.¹² It foreshadows the style of painting that would later characterise her most prolific oeuvre, the small-scale compositions of women engaged in outdoor daily life. Painted on a small lightweight wooden panel, suggesting the work was done in situ, *Pumpkin sellers* presents a scene with which Carrick was familiar, the historic Uxbridge Market in the town's market square.¹³ Not yet confident of the Impressionist palette of vibrant colour, here she employed a subdued tonality, the legacy of Brown's teaching. Tonks's linear style to define form is shown in Carrick's use of broken brushwork to structure the composition, a precursor of the painting technique she would soon adopt. In 1902 Carrick painted at Caudebec on the Seine, near Rouen, during which it is possible she saw Impressionist works incorporating thick impasto and 'broken colour' at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen,¹⁴ which she then incorporated in *Pumpkin sellers*. Carrick's depiction of working women, especially those generally less privileged and less empowered than herself, emphasises her early interest in womanhood as a means by which to explore injustices.

¹⁰ Simon Watney, *English Post-Impressionism* (London: Eastview Editions), 1980, p. 21.

¹¹ Fox left Melbourne for England in 1901. After visiting Paris, he went to London and from there relocated to St Ives, where he posed models by the sea for his major Australian history painting *The landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770* 1902. The National Gallery of Victoria under the terms of the Gilbee Bequest, which required that it be painted overseas, commissioned the picture.

¹² Private collection, Melbourne.

¹³ The Uxbridge Market was chartered on the square in the town centre in 1180.

¹⁴ The Museum possesses an outstanding collection of Impressionist paintings, the greater part of which was gifted by François Depeaux in 1909. However, at the time of Carrick's visit to Caudebec in 1902, the Museum held many fine examples of Impressionism.



Image 54. Ethel Carrick *Pumpkin sellers* c. 1903-04
Oil on wood panel, 22 x 30.5 cm

Where the other five case studies saw expatriatism as a vital means of augmenting their colonial art training through study at a leading European government-sanctioned institution or private atelier, Carrick had already achieved this objective through her education at the Slade during

one of its most important periods, described by Henry Tonks as its ‘crisis of brilliance’, referring to a gifted generation of students emerging at that time. She was already cognisant of trends in contemporary art through the Slade’s French-inspired curriculum and so saw Paris as the best place to test her training and launch her career; but this did not absolve her from expatriatism’s challenges, including adapting to a new and largely unfamiliar culture.

Creative Coupling: The Influence of E. Phillips Fox on Carrick’s Assimilation into the Parisian Artistic Milieu

As previously noted, Carrick most likely met Fox in 1901 at St Ives in Cornwall. They were engaged in 1904 and married the following year in London, their marriage attended by many prominent Australian artists living in Europe.¹⁵ Shortly after, the couple moved to Paris and took up residence at 65 boulevard Arago in Montparnasse. Known as the *Cité Fleurie* (Flowered Place) and comprising some thirty artists’ studios, from the late 1870s this set of buildings housed several notable artists including Paul Gauguin, the French sculptor Henri Laurens, and Amedeo Modigliani.¹⁶ The studio apartment remained Carrick’s Paris abode until 1943.¹⁷ It is

¹⁵ The wedding notice, together with the list of attendees was published in the *British Australasian* (London), May–June 1905, p. 621. Among the Australian artistic community, the guests included Rupert Bunny, George Coates and Dora Meeson, George Lambert, John Longstaff, Bernard Hall (who from Melbourne probably visited London especially for the event), Bertram Mackennal, Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Violet Teague and Tudor St George Tucker. The English artists George Clausen and Solomon J. Solomon are also listed as having attended the wedding.

¹⁶ Max Saunders, *Ford Maddox Ford: A Dual Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), vol. 11, 1996, p. 133.

¹⁷ In 1943, while Carrick was living in Sydney, the contents of the apartment were confiscated and

little known that the residence was just two blocks from the notorious La Santé Prison, located at the intersection of boulevard Arago and rue de la Santé, where on the corner pavement numerous public executions by guillotine took place until 1939.¹⁸ That Carrick lived alone from 1916 onwards in close proximity to such a gruesome practice seems remarkable. Despite the unsavoury street location, the *Cité Fleurie* itself was a haven, full of like-minded artists and surrounded by beautiful tree shrouded gardens.

Fox was an experienced expatriate, having lived and worked in Europe from 1887 to 1892. The greater part of this period was spent in Paris where, with the support of his brothers, he attended classes at the Académie Julian, École des Beaux-Arts and with the American Impressionist Alexander Harrison. In the summers Fox joined artists at the popular coastal *plein-air* sites of Étapes, north of Paris and Le Pouldu in Brittany. He also spent time painting in the rural villages of Cernay-la-ville and Giverny, near Paris. During his initial expatriatism Fox befriended a number of Australian artists, including John Russell and Bertram Mackennal, and renewed friendships with National Gallery School acquaintances John Longstaff and Tudor St George Tucker.¹⁹ Following his return to Australia, he continued to retain links with Europe, exhibiting at both the Paris Salon and Royal Academy in London before eventually returning in 1901.

Thus, in moving with Carrick to Paris, Fox was well acquainted with the city, its artistic milieu and the challenges expatriatism presented and which he had clearly surmounted. Indeed, Fox enjoyed a remarkably successful first expatriatism, subsequently pioneering *plein-airism* at the celebrated summer schools at ‘Charterisville’ in Melbourne, selling his first works to Australian public art collections, and maintaining exhibition contacts in Paris and London, all achieved within six years of his return to Australia.²⁰

auctioned by the Nazi’s during the German occupation of Paris.

¹⁸ Thirty-seven prisoners were publicly guillotined at this site between 1909 and 1939, when the second-last public execution in France was held. Capital punishment was banned in France in 1977.

¹⁹ Anne Gray, *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), 2004, p. 162.

²⁰ In 1894 Fox was awarded a third-class medal at the Salon des Artistes Français; from 1893 he spent a great deal of time painting at ‘Charterisville’; and in 1898 his work was acquired for the

Although their marriage was short-lived, Carrick and Fox lived, worked and travelled as one, equals in life and art. Fox was clearly willing to meet Carrick on her terms, and was understanding of her sense of artistic adventure and determination in achieving greater independence for the women of her generation. His respect and support for her values and achievements were crucial to their successful union. Carrick was visibly the bolder and more modern of the two, evident in both her approach to painting and her fascination with urban social spaces. Fox was more conservative and more complex, his sensitive portrayals of women and sensual glimpses into the bourgeois domestic sphere revealing a greater intimacy and elegance. Dora Meeson and George Coates were similar in this respect, Meeson being the more radical in promoting women's suffrage and painting the working life of the River Thames, an essentially masculine subject. Both couples probably shared similar values, including their resolve not to have children, instead devoting themselves fully to their professional careers. Meeson's previously established English connections and unwavering support abetted Coates's assimilation into British culture.²¹ Similarly, Fox was cognisant of Carrick's situation as a comparative newcomer to Paris and provided support to her cultural integration.

Fox's earlier positive experience of expatriatism and compassionate nature gave vital encouragement to Carrick's fostering of a sense of belonging and of 'solidarity bonds' with her adopted culture.²² With her maturity (she was thirty-three), cosmopolitan London experience and two earlier painting trips to France, to Caudebec and Chartres in the summers of 1902 and 1903,²³ assimilation was less a struggle than an easing-in process for her. Carrick was more or less the same age as Agnes Goodsir when she first arrived in Paris, although Goodsir was single and an untested atelier student where Carrick was already well educated artistically, partnered and self-assured. Although both artists lived in close proximity in

collections of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney and the National Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

²¹ From late 1893 to c. 1895 Meeson studied at the esteemed Slade School of Fine Art under Henry Tonks. Both of her parents had moved permanently from Melbourne to London in the late 1890s, thus providing valued support to Meeson and later to both she and Coates.

²² Montserrat Guibernau, 'Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: A critical assessment', in *Nations and Nationalism* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell), vol. 10, issue 1–2, 2004, pp. 134–36.

²³ Angela Goddard, *Art, Love and Life: Ethel Carrick and E. Phillips Fox* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art), p. 148.

Montparnasse,²⁴ it is unlikely they ever met because of Goodsir's return to Australia in 1906 and subsequent relocation to London.

Carrick and Goodsir were then at different stages in their careers. Carrick saw Paris as the place to keep abreast of artistic developments in working *en plein air* and in colour theory at a time when Impressionism began to secure a strong foothold in the international market. She was seeking to consolidate her position as an emerging artist away from British conservatism, and Paris's progressive artistic milieu and ground-breaking Salon d'Automne were the places to achieve it.²⁵ Goodsir, in contrast, after a concentrated period of study in Paris was ready to take the next step by launching her career in London. She had yet to find the emotional connection to people and place which, as we have seen, is required of effective assimilation; thus the necessity for her to go back, to realign herself with Anglocentric culture in order to move forward towards later integration into French culture. Perhaps, too, as a single woman and a lesbian, both counter-productive to her cultural assimilation given the mores of the time, and also as a new arrival, Goodsir found it more difficult to gain social acceptance, even in liberal and tolerant Paris. In 1920 she decided to take a 'second shot', her developing relationship with Rachel Dunn an added incentive for her return.

Carrick's status as a married woman, especially to an older and talented mid-career artist,²⁶ worked significantly in her favour. While she never adopted the traditional role of full-time wife, Carrick's marriage granted her both financial security and emotional wellbeing. Fox's progressiveness in treating Carrick as his equal, in offering her a greater measure of freedom and control over her own life, the present-day equivalent of equal contract or legal equality, placed her in a stronger and more influential position than most women of her generation, which allowed her to move more freely in public and in public space.

Carrick and Goodsir were independent women with a sense of their own professional

²⁴ Goodsir lived near Cimetière du Montparnasse, which was easily accessible via boulevard Raspail from Carrick's apartment in boulevard Arago.

²⁵ Carrick exhibited with the Salon d'Automne from 1906–12. She also showed with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts from 1906–08 and 1910–12.

²⁶ Born in Melbourne in 1865, Fox was seven years older than Carrick.

status and identity in the art world. This empowered them to challenge the gender divide on what was considered appropriate for women artists to paint. A male-controlled market sanctioned the ‘spaces of femininity’, domestic settings linked with the personal and private interior world of women. Carrick ultimately contested this convention, inverting the relationship of the masculine and feminine spheres by painting women in scenes set outdoors, traditionally the domain of male authority. She was not alone in her mission. The Western Australian Kathleen O’Connor, working in Paris between 1908 and 1914, also painted images of women out of doors, chiefly in the Luxembourg Gardens,²⁷ a favourite painting site for artists living in the Latin Quarter. Both painters were well ahead of their time in observing and painting women in the open air, the trend not catching on in Australian art until the late 1920s and 1930s when artists such as Elise Bluman, Grace Crowley, Grace Cossington Smith and Freda Robertshaw embraced the genre.²⁸

Public Spaces as Subjects for Carrick’s Paintings: Inverting the Spatial Tenets of Impressionism

Almost from the beginning of her career, Carrick closely aligned herself with the basic principles of Impressionism. Until the 1920s the movement still held currency in Paris. The vigour and dynamism of the Salon d’Automne from 1903, with its massive exhibitions showcasing developments and innovations in contemporary art – at first the boldly coloured canvases of the Fauves and then the reduced and fractured geometric forms of the Cubists – could not discourage painters like Carrick from their commitment to Impressionism or, more exactly, to its waning influence.²⁹

While technical ingenuity is Impressionism’s revolutionary legacy,³⁰ the movement also pioneered the subject of modern urban life as a major narrative in art. This might

²⁷ Janda Gooding, *Chasing Shadows: The Art of Kathleen O’Connor* (Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia), 1996, p. 22.

²⁸ Nancy Guest, Nora Heysen, Hilda Rix Nicholas, Thea Proctor, Ethel Spowers and others also painted outdoor spaces, but their works are generally devoid of female figures.

²⁹ The eighth and last Impressionist exhibition was held in Paris in 1886. The Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris established the international reputation of the Impressionists, but with aesthetic shifts like Neo-Impressionism and Post-Impressionism developing from and in reaction to Impressionism, the Impressionist cause began to wane in France in the late 1880s and 1890s.

³⁰ Impressionism pioneered technical innovations such as freer brushwork; lighter, purer and more intense colour; bold shortened perspective; and the use of the camera to capture the fleeting effect of light, atmosphere and movement.

well have been unachievable without the massive mid nineteenth-century physical remodelling of Paris, the joint initiative of Napoléon III and his *prefect* Georges-Eugène Haussmann to make the French capital the most modern and powerful metropolis in Europe. Between 1854 and 1870, in an extraordinary public infrastructure program, crowded and unhealthy medieval areas of the city were demolished and replaced with an ambitious network of new tree-lined boulevards, apartment buildings, parks and gardens, as well as railway stations and other important structures. At the same time a new underground labyrinth of pipes, sewers and tunnels provided Parisians with basic services including gas lighting and heating. For the first time Paris was '*La Ville Lumière*', the 'City of Light'.

Napoléon's directive to Baron Haussmann, '*d'aérer, unifier et embellir la ville*',³¹ to give Paris air and open space and to unify the different parts of the city and to make it more beautiful, had significant social and cultural implications for its citizens that permeated all layers of society. Most importantly, Haussmann's modernisation program improved the quality of life of the capital, including far more leisure and recreational opportunities for Parisians with the addition of two thousand hectares of parks and green spaces, and the planting of six hundred thousand trees.³² Never before had a city built so many parks and gardens in such a short time. They were an immediate public success,³³ with artists especially utilising the new *plein-air* lifestyle to paint outdoors, renewing the practice of mid-nineteenth century precursors such as Eugène Boudin and Johan-Barthold Jongkind.³⁴

For the early Impressionists Paris's transformation assumed iconic status, with artists such as Monet, Pissarro and Renoir taking the city's urbanity as the major motif for their art. Before long, Seurat and even Van Gogh systematically targeted this subject in their paintings. Scenes of everyday life, of the bourgeoisie indulging in pleasure in the bars, cafes and theatres as well as the newly constructed outdoor spaces of Paris,

³¹ Patrice de Moncan, *Le Paris d'Haussmann* (Paris: Les Éditions du Mécène), 2009, p. 33.

³² Ibid, pp. 107–09.

³³ However, Haussmann's transformation saw many working-class domiciles and workplaces destroyed, requiring a wholesale relocation of lower-class residents to the *banlieux* on the periphery of Paris.

³⁴ Bodin and Jongkind took their cue from the English artists Richard Bonington, John Constable and J. M. W. Turner, as well as from Corot and the Barbizon group who had already insisted on the need to capture fleeting atmospheric effects working directly out-of-doors.

became their focus. The urban and rural embankments of the Seine, along with various beachside retreats in Brittany and Normandy made accessible by the makeover and building of new railway stations (for example, Gare du Nord) and railway lines also provided artists with fresh subjects to paint.

As British cultural theorist Griselda Pollock explains in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (1988), the motif of public outdoor space largely remained the domain of male artists, reflecting the ongoing seclusion of women artists in the domestic sphere. The home, balconies, private gardens and spaces involving childcare and passive recreation and leisure lingered as chief subjects for the female artist's gaze.³⁵ As Pollock argues, Impressionist painting practices perpetuated gendered traditions, aligning artists with the motifs with which they were customarily associated. Thus public space, the sphere of masculine experience, prevailed as the dominant subject matter of Impressionism, where male artists numerically overshadowed women.

Pollock asks two important questions concerning Impressionist iconography. Could Berthe Morisot have gone to a location such as *Le bar des Folies-Bergère* (*A bar at the Folies-Bergère*) in 1881–82 when Édouard Manet painted his last major work? Could she as a woman have experienced such pleasurable modernity in the bustling interior of one of the most prominent cabaret music halls of Paris,³⁶ notorious as a place to pick up prostitutes and where the barmaids were described as 'vendors of drink and of love'?³⁷ Pollock says no, because of the 'historical asymmetry, a difference socially, economically [and] subjectively'³⁸ between being a woman and being a man in Paris in the late nineteenth century. This difference, the 'product of the social structuration of sexual difference and not any imaginary biological distinction'³⁹ determined both what and how men and women painted'.

³⁵ See Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the spaces of femininity', in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (Abingdon: Routledge), 1988, pp. 50–90.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 51.

³⁷ Guy de Maupassant, *Bel Ami* (1885), translated by Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2001, quoted at Édouard Manet, *A bar at the Folies-Bergère*, <http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/GALLERY/collections/paintings/imppostimp/manet/foliesbergere/index.shtml>, accessed 17 January 2015.

³⁸ Griselda Pollock, p. 52.

³⁹ Ibid, pp. 52–53.

Using Morisot and Mary Cassatt as exemplars, Pollock raises two further questions: how did the socially contrived orders of sexual difference structure their lives? and how did this structure affect what they painted? The matrix Pollock considers is that of space. She maintains that space can be grasped in several dimensions, including as location and structure, the latter as spatial order within paintings such as varying viewpoints, cryptic framing devices and the like. Pollock demonstrates that the spatial proximity and compression characteristic of the works of Cassatt and Morisot demarcate the ‘spaces of femininity’, denoting the remoteness and rigidity of the domestic spaces they inhabited and the social lives they experienced as women. In contrast, Pollock contends that the spatial structure of paintings by male Impressionist painters such as Monet, Pissarro and Renoir is less condensed and less proximate, signalling the freedom with which they moved and painted in the socially fluid, masculine public sphere.



Image 55 Berthe Morisot *Sur l'herbe* (*On the grass*) 1874

Coloured pastels, dimensions unknown

Morisot, more so than Cassatt and Marie Bracquemond, described by French art historian Henri Focillon in 1928 as *la troisième grande dame* of Impressionism, produced imagery located in the outdoor public sphere; for instance of women promenading, relaxing in parks and boating. Invariably these women are portrayed in the company of children or other women, reinforcing their attachment to the domestic sphere, and as passive

observers rather than participants in spatially compressed spaces. *Sur l'herbe* (*On the grass*) 1874⁴⁰ by Morisot captures a moment of intimacy between the assumed mother and her two children, with the dog compliantly looking at the woman. The ocular engagement between the three human participants is directed inwardly to the dog, creating a trilateral spatial compression which is accentuated by the condensed squareness of the paper support. The focus of the painting is not the figures of

⁴⁰ Collection of the Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris.

mother and child (itself a time-honoured theme), but the lush grassy terrain enclosed by the figures' gaze, a compact private space shaped by femininity or, more accurately, by Morisot's structuring of it. The place from which Morisot worked becomes part of the scene, establishing a sense of proximity in the foreground. This places the viewer in the same space and connects them directly with the central figure, whose secluded space is interrupted by their external gaze. Perhaps the painter had set up her easel in the Bois de Boulogne or Bois de Vincennes, both enormous parks recently constructed by Haussmann for bourgeois leisure and recreation,⁴¹ and readily accessed by carriage and horse-drawn omnibus.



Image 56 Berthe Morisot *Un jour d'été (Summer's day)* c. 1879
Oil on canvas, 45 x 72.5 cm

Un jour d'été (Summer's day) c. 1879⁴² depicts a leisure scene on one of the recently constructed lakes of Paris's *bois*. Morisot portrays two women on a boating excursion who seem slightly anxious in the moment that she observed them. The

central figure appears especially apprehensive in meeting the male gaze, presumably of the boatman propelling the craft. This is because in keeping with the propriety of the period, 'well-behaved women' would not have socialised unsupervised, not to mention have looked directly at a man for an extended period. The upper three-quarters of the canvas reveals a view of the lake represented in traditional perspective, while in one corner, spatially compressed by the handrail of the boat, the two figures are seated at an oblique angle in their own private space, detached from the view behind them. The railing functions as a pictorial divide and also as a gender 'boundary', delineating the 'spaces of femininity and masculinity' in the public sphere.

The question arises: did Morisot respond intuitively or with intent when constructing

⁴¹ The Bois de Boulogne to the west of Paris was built between 1852 and 1858 and the Bois de Vincennes to the east between 1860 and 1865.

⁴² Collection of the National Gallery, London.

Sur l'herbe and *Un jour d'été*? The answer is most likely instinctively since, like most women of her generation, she was strongly conditioned by the mores of the time, which discouraged women from exercising leadership or taking initiative. Therefore, how was it possible only a decade or so after Morisot's death (in 1895) for Carrick to venture into public space and use it effectively as her studio and principal subject matter for her art? The answer lies in the great generational change affecting women at the turn of the twentieth century, empowering them to play a more active role and, in the case of Carrick, to paint a hitherto circumscribed masculine subject like *Corrida à Biarritz (Bullfight at Biarritz)* c. 1908. For Francisco de Goya and Édouard Manet, bullfighting scenes were a conventional theme to the extent that they serialised it through numerous works,⁴³ but for women the subject had remained off limits.

As western countries like France and Britain became increasingly industrialised and urban in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women's activism intensified. Focusing initially on gaining suffrage and democratic rights, the feminist campaign grew to embrace fundamental issues such as better opportunities for women in education and employment. The growing respectability of post-secondary education and professional employment for females, especially among those belonging to the privileged upper classes of society, gradually led women into a new position of autonomy and choice influencing their social expectations and changing their social roles.⁴⁴ As we saw in Chapter 6, increasing freedoms in France in the 1920s, the outcome of greater legal, economic and social autonomy, sanctioned Agnes Goodsir's embracement and portrayal of an alternative lifestyle, although within the private realm of domestic life. There was still reticence about too openly declaring her lesbianism in her work, exemplified by the fact that the main subject of her portraits, Cherry, was not directly identified and her face was concealed in shadow. Conversely, Carrick embraced gendered spaces more directly, emphasising

⁴³ For example, in 1815–16 Goya created *La tauromaquia (Bullfighting)*, a series of thirty-three etchings and aquatints depicting the excitement and violence of the bullring. Earlier he had depicted himself as a bullfighter in *Autorretrato ante su caballete (Self-portrait with easel)* 1790–95, oil on canvas (Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes, Madrid). Manet's ten-day trip to Spain in 1865 had a profound impact that informed several of his later canvases portraying bullfights and toreros.

⁴⁴ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Woman.

through her paintings that masculinised public space could be feminised and transformed into gender-neutral territory.

Class difference and privileged circumstances played a critical role in influencing the extent to which women achieved independence. Carrick and Goodsir were from respectable middle-class backgrounds where the arts were nurtured and valued as a careerist lifestyle.⁴⁵ As artists, both became part of a professional enterprise that overcame the stereotype of women ‘as a class ... set aside to minister to men’s comfort’,⁴⁶ instead promoting women’s work and becoming part of the emerging image of the educated and modern ‘new woman’. Carrick and Goodsir played crucial roles in representing this emerging type, exemplifying it in their own lives and painting its image. For the four male case studies, patriarchal authority legitimised and endorsed lives and careers that were far less constrained. Even as women gained autonomy and opportunities, the sphere of public participation for these men remained largely unchanged, since cultural and social transformations were often complex and protracted.

Corrida à Biarritz is a seminal work signalling Carrick’s autonomy as a female painter and commitment to the public sphere as a major thematic focus for her work. The painting also foreshadows her love of travel (she was possibly Australia’s most travelled expatriate), which rendered her a ‘citizen of the world’.⁴⁷ It was painted around 1908, for women in France a landmark year that saw the granting of legal majority, allowing them lawful control over their own person and possessions. Henceforth, they were no longer treated as minors, but legally entitled to the management of their own affairs and the enjoyment of civic rights.⁴⁸ Carrick, who within marriage had been part of one entity where the husband had control of all property, earnings and money, was now a separate individual with the right of

⁴⁵ Goodsir was the daughter of the Commissioner of Customs in Melbourne and attended reputable local schools, where she studied French and drawing. She enjoyed a privileged lifestyle (the Goodsir’s employed servants and a nursemaid) before settling in Bendigo to study art. Carrick was the daughter of a well-established draper and educated at home, and at London’s Guildhall School of Music, before later attending art school.

⁴⁶ Winnifred Harper Cooley, *The New Womanhood* (New York: Broadway Publishing Company), 1904, p. 32.

⁴⁷ Between 1905 and 1952, Carrick travelled and worked in Paris, Melbourne, London, Kashmir, Sydney, Tangier and Nice.

⁴⁸ Diana Holmes, *French Women’s Writing, 1848–1994* (London: The Athlone Press), 1996, pp. 3–25.

ownership and an increased level of public licence. While Carrick and Fox enjoyed a gender-neutral relationship, living and working side by side, this new social and legal entitlement increased Carrick's ability to travel unaccompanied and access the public sphere, including to masculine spaces like the bullring.⁴⁹

Measuring just 38.5 x 45.5cm, *Corrida à Biarritz* was well suited to Carrick's *plein-*



Image 57 Ethel Carrick *Corrida à Biarritz (Bullfight at Biarritz)* c. 1908
Oil on canvas, 38.5 x 45.5 cm

air painting practice. It portrays a scene from a Spanish-style *corrida* (bullfight), which since the nineteenth century had been a traditional spectacle in Biarritz. A French Basque seaside town in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Biarritz had been made popular by Empress Eugénie during the Second Empire and had continued to be a much sought-after holiday destination for

fashionable Parisians after that.⁵⁰ The artist's view is some distance from the arena where the bullfight takes place, perhaps so she could discreetly and with a still expected measure of propriety sketch the scene before her. Carrick has peopled the surrounding stands with spectators of both genders, but in the foreground she has prominently positioned a number of neatly hatted (probably Parisian) women. Their gaze is directed away from the artist and thus the viewer, towards the bullfight. They are engrossed in a strongly masculine spectacle that is at once relatively new and challenging, and perhaps even shocking. In presenting these women as the focus of the painting and by crowding out and thus excluding the barrier separating them from the bullring (the masculine realm), Carrick secured *corrida* (bullfighting) for

⁴⁹ The bullring remained a patriarchal space until the 1930s. La Reverte (Maria Salomé) was an exception becoming in the early 1900s one of the public's most praised and adored bullfighters. In 1908, the government banned her because she was a woman. However, La Reverte shocked the world by taking off her wig and costume and revealing that she was actually a man, Agustin Rodriguez. Once the truth was revealed, the government allowed Rodriguez to continue as a torero.

⁵⁰ In discussion with Professor Jonathan Holmes, Tasmanian College of the Arts, University of Tasmania in Hobart on 23 September 2015.

women in the public sphere.

In contrast, Manet's paintings of bullfighting scenes were constructed from a dominant masculine position. The view is often from ground level and from within the arena itself; occasionally he painted himself as the matador, the embodiment of control and domination and thus of social superiority. Manet's attention was directed to the incident, to the encounter between man and beast, and not to the spectacle that Carrick highlighted. In his imagery the key figures are invariably male and the spectators play a subordinate role, their depiction frequently edging the canvas. In *The dead toreador* c. 1865⁵¹ Manet extracted the figure of a fallen matador from the context of the bullfight and staged it dramatically in a featureless background, and in so doing created an icon, an isolated and compelling image of sudden and violent death and also of masculinity.

Lionel Lindsay produced intaglio prints and watercolours of bullfighting scenes during his trips to Spain in the 1920s, but *Corrida à Biarritz* remains a remarkable image in Australian art since Carrick painted it at a time when patriarchy prevailed and women's rights and public interests were frowned upon. In challenging attitudes to women's behaviour in public, Carrick helped lead the way for other women artists to approach painting as an inclusive rather than a privileged tradition. Just as Grace Cossington Smith's *The sock knitter* in 1915 contested artistic conventions by championing Post-Impressionism, so too *Corrida à Biarritz* radicalised Australian art by making it possible for women artists of the inter-war years to embrace the external world through a modern feminine aesthetic.

Parks, Beaches and Markets: Contested Spaces for Exploring Carrick's Feminism, Modernism and Assimilated Identity

In this section I examine a group of eight paintings completed mostly between 1906 and c. 1912 but also including two works from c. 1926, to demonstrate how Carrick employed 'spatial inversion' to paint the world of women in newly contested public spaces: urban parks and marketplaces, and the beaches of northern France.

⁵¹ Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Like most Parisians, Carrick lived in close proximity to parks. From her apartment in boulevard Arago she could readily access the popular twenty-five hectare Luxembourg Gardens, with its fountains, sculpture, ponds, flowerbeds and open-air cafes. People went there to stroll, people-watch, sit at one of the cafes or bring their children to play. Carrick probably used it also as the entryway to the Musée du Luxembourg, the French national gallery devoted to contemporary art, where fellow expatriate Rupert Bunny's *Après le bain* was displayed, together with Whistler's *Arrangement in grey and black no. 1* 1871, which had been an object of significant attention for Goodsir.



Image 58 Ethel Carrick *Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris* (Luxembourg Gardens, Paris) c. 1906
Oil on wood panel, 26.5 x 35 cm

Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris (Luxembourg Gardens, Paris) and *Scène de parc, Paris* (Park scene, Paris)⁵² were painted about 1906 and portray women promenading and lunching in the Luxembourg Gardens.⁵³ With two artists working in one apartment and the huge scale of Fox's canvases, Carrick's choice of outdoor subjects may have been a practical solution to studio

space constraints. She usually worked on small portable canvases or wood panels *in situ* unless weather, the dictates of place, or a preference to compose larger canvases obliged her to work indoors. Both *Jardin du Luxembourg* and *Scène de parc* incorporate small wood panels suggesting they were painted out-of-doors, where Carrick's presence would have attracted considerable interest from onlookers. The women depicted in these paintings are part of the new urban crowd that embraced the leisure and consumerism of cosmopolitan life in Paris during the early twentieth century. Their fashionable costumes suggest they probably shopped at Le Bon

⁵² Both paintings are in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

⁵³ *Scène de parc* can be authenticated as a scene from the Luxembourg Gardens because of the sculpture of the lion and also the pillared railing, both of which actually edge the octagonal basin in the Gardens.

Marché, the major department store of the Left Bank, or at the new Galeries Lafayette on boulevard Haussmann, near L'Opéra Garnier, both key sites of Parisian style and modernity. The emblematic inhabitant of the new metropolis was the idle urban observer, the *flâneur*, who was quintessentially masculine. However, as British cultural theorist Elizabeth Wilson notes, in this period of increasing feminism women could become *flâneuses*.⁵⁴ Carrick's role as an observer of public space – rather than one being observed – embodied this figure of modernity.



Image 59 Ethel Carrick *Scène de parc, Paris* (Park scene, Paris) 1906
Oil on artists' board, 26.5 x 35 cm

In *Art, Love and Life: Ethel Carrick and E. Phillips Fox* (2011), Angela Goddard contends that in Carrick's paintings 'women are most frequently captured at work, as peasant farmers or shopkeepers or engaged in household duties'.⁵⁵ However, apart from several market

scenes focusing on women's labour, the evidence, including Goddard's book itself, suggests otherwise.⁵⁶ In fact, Carrick's French œuvre mostly draws attention to bourgeois women entertaining or amusing themselves in pleasurable pastimes. *Scène de parc* includes images of children, but the adjacent women are not represented in a maternal role: rather they appear as guardians of the three girls, possibly in a shared arrangement authorising their leisurely promenading and conversation. The nursemaid and baby carriage depicted in the left foreground of *Jardin du Luxembourg* signify a gendered role, but the middle-class status of the assumed mother in purple, seated diagonally opposite at the outdoor café, sanctions her freedom from parental responsibility. Carrick was middle class and a feminist

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Wilson, 'The invisible flâneur: Afterword', in *The Contradictions of Culture: Cities, Culture, Women* (London: Sage), 2001, p. 93.

⁵⁵ Angela Goddard, p. 80.

⁵⁶ Only one-third of the paintings by Carrick illustrated in the book capture women at work.

advocate, and with artistic authority transformed these scenes into feminine spaces by peopling them entirely with females, a retort to the inherent historical bias against the rights and equality of women by men. As in the English work *Pumpkin sellers*, a low-key tonality prevails in both, the spaces devoid of the airiness and brightness with which Carrick's paintings post-1908 are infused following a working holiday with Fox in Australia.⁵⁷ The crowded grouping of the figures in a compressed space, indicative of the denseness of urban living, delineates them as the product of European experience.

In 1909 Carrick summered in Deauville, located across the Baie de la Seine from Le Havre in Normandy. Known as the 'queen of the Norman beaches', in the early twentieth century the town was a fashionable holiday resort for the Parisian bourgeoisie. Eugène Boudin painted the long sandy beaches of Deauville and adjacent Trouville in the 1860s, as did Manet and Monet in the 1870s. Marcel Proust portrayed Deauville in his most prominent work, *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*), which he began writing there in 1909. In visiting these coastal retreats, the most likely painting sites for *Sur la plage* (*On the beach*) and *Scène de plage* (*Beach scene*), both painted c. 1909,⁵⁸ Carrick followed a long tradition of artistic connection with this popular north-western region of France.

In *Sur la plage* the principal figures are shown promenading on the beach, an experience in which Carrick and Fox would have frequently indulged. Away from the urbanity of Paris, men and women still dressed with sophistication and refinement, parading both fashion and position of wealth. The tall, graceful woman on the left of the painting is dressed in a white, frilly summer skirt and wide-brimmed hat, probably tailor-made in Paris, and the gentleman sports a fashionable boater and white trousers. Both promote stylistic flair, a symbol of France's self-positioning in international fashion and design at the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁹ In celebrating French couture in her works, Carrick projected her own femininity and

⁵⁷ In 1908, the couple spent eight months in Melbourne and Sydney.

⁵⁸ The paintings are in the collections of the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, respectively.

⁵⁹ Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1989, pp. 53–54. Paris's 1900 Exposition Universelle placed fashion as central to modern France.

modernity, and also her escapist voyeurism into the luxury and wealth of high society.



Image 60 Ethel Carrick *Scène de plage (Beach scene)* c. 1909
Oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, 38 x 55.5 cm

Australian cultural historian Juliette Peers maintains that Carrick and Fox treated fashion differently in their paintings:

Fox's treatment ... alludes to ... ideas of displaying and packaging female beauty. The notion of the inherent delicacy of a woman threads through his images: her affinity with flowers, the

secluded, enclosed garden and the boudoir affirms certain gendered boundaries upholding both the natural and political order of the times ... Painting was for ... Fox ... an existential means of communication with and exploration of specific attitudes to women more than simply just a choice of subject. Selection and observation of dress and styling was intrinsic to making his ideal women and imagined muses tangible.⁶⁰

In contrast, costume in Carrick's paintings becomes, as it did for Baudelaire almost five decades earlier, a sign of the changing times, of modernity itself.⁶¹ As Peers asserts, 'Dress articulates her engagement with the changing, mobile expressions of the modern'.⁶² Agnes Goodsir's portrayals of a modishly attired Cherry more than a decade later also signify modernity, but the 'moral and aesthetic feeling'⁶³ was sanctioned by war's aftershock, relaxing dress codes and offering women the opportunity to explore fashion and lifestyle with greater freedom.

⁶⁰ Juliette Peers, "'Tall, graceful women sweep by': Fashion and dress in the work of the Foxes", in Angela Goddard, op. cit., p. 100.

⁶¹ Charles Baudelaire, 'Beauty, fashion and happiness', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (1863), translated by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon), 1964, pp. 1–4.

⁶² Juliette Peers, op. cit.

⁶³ Charles Baudelaire, p. 2.



Image 61 Ethel Carrick *Sur la plage (On the beach)* c. 1909
Oil on canvas, 36 x 42 cm



Image 62 Charles Conder *A holiday at Mentone* 1888
Oil on canvas, 46 x 61 cm

Carrick's paintings foreshadow the 'new woman', whereas Goodsir's actually portray her. Both artists brought a distinctive feminist perspective to their art, Carrick through her freedom and equality within marriage shaping how she portrayed the female experience in public outdoor space, and Goodsir through the sexual autonomy which influenced her way of life and the work she produced. The feminine experience revealed in Carrick's paintings is one of equanimity and certainty. In *Sur la plage*, the elegantly dressed woman appears as the more assertive figure: the man walking behind her and the one seated on the barrier succumb to her presence, both assuming

passive roles. There is, however, an intimation of masculine pursuit by the man on foot, not unlike Charles Conder's beach painting *A holiday at Mentone* 1888,⁶⁴ where the gentleman pauses and lingers near the woman reading.

In each, the positioning of the narrow stretches of ocean, broad expanses of beach and horizon lines has been similarly represented. The interaction between the principal figures, with the women averting their gazes from the men (although in Carrick's image the lady holds the advantage) is also similar. The forms of the cropped seated man and wall in Carrick's painting correspond with the outer wall of the enclosed baths in Conder's portrayal, both shapes counterbalancing the facing upper left sections of the compositions. Each work is characterised by an intensity of

⁶⁴ Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

light, not unusual for Conder but a new experience for Carrick, newly asserting the subject of the outdoors as a natural motif for women to paint. Conder had yet to experience European Impressionism directly when he painted *A holiday at Mentone*.⁶⁵ It is a work produced through the lens of the Heidelberg School via a Japoniste adaptation of Whistler aestheticism and a nationalist aesthetic,⁶⁶ with little interest in technical experimentation. In contrast, Carrick had already grasped Impressionism as a witness to the works and the painting sites at Caudebec and Chartres, and moreover was a regular exhibitor between 1906 and 1912 at the annual Salon d'Automne, where the movement's legacy was seen in focused exhibitions of Post-Impressionism.⁶⁷ *A holiday at Mentone* is celebrated as 'perhaps the nation's most charming Impressionist picture';⁶⁸ so too *Sur la plage* is possibly one of the most compelling in this genre.

*Le quai à Dinard (The quay at Dinard)*⁶⁹ was painted c. 1911–12 on the Côte d'Émeraude in Brittany, its beaches and mild climate aiding the convalescence of Carrick, who had been ill.⁷⁰ Three stylishly clothed women and a young girl appear in the foreground; the remaining figures, mainly couples promenading on the quayside, are positioned on the side and in the mid-ground. This loose figural arrangement corroborating the women and child as the focal point (a strategy evident also in *Sur la plage*) creates a pictorial space invoking the primacy of the female sex, fashioned by Carrick's feminist propensities and desire to break down the gender divide. Desegregated beach bathing was increasingly common at seaside resorts such as Dinard and Deauville by this time (although bathing apparel for women was strictly regulated until the late 1920s), so Carrick's construction of gender-neutral beach scenes with women prominently positioned in them may be seen as part of the movement to strengthen public consciousness of social equality in these spaces.

⁶⁵ Conder first worked in Paris from 1890, two years after completing *A holiday at Mentone*.

⁶⁶ Ron Radford, 'Celebration: Charles Conder, *A holiday at Mentone*, 1888', in Daniel Thomas (ed.), *Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art, 1788–1988* (Sydney and Adelaide: International Cultural Corporation of Australia and Art Gallery Board of South Australia), 1988, p. 116.

⁶⁷ In 1906, for example, the Salon d'Automne featured a Gauguin retrospective and a small exhibition of ten works by Cézanne.

⁶⁸ Ron Radford, p. 117.

⁶⁹ Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

⁷⁰ Angela Goddard, p. 149.



Image 63 Ethel Carrick *Le quai à Dinard* (*The quay at Dinard*)
c. 1911-12
Oil on canvas mounted on plywood, 71 x 91 cm

Sur la plage and *Scène de plage* were painted after Carrick's first visit to Australia in 1908, and *Le quai à Dinard* after her trip to Algeria and Morocco in 1911.

She was quoted in 1925 as noting that 'The light in Australia reminds me of North Africa more than any other country I [have] ever been in'.⁷¹ The influence of the intensity of Australian and

North African light is felt through

the high-keyed colouring in these three paintings, which is also a feature of the group of works depicting flower markets painted from around 1909 onwards. We know that Carrick spent a great deal of time painting *en plein air* during her trips to both continents,⁷² and the extent to which the light and mood of these regions shaped her Europeanised vision is clear. Upon her return to Paris Carrick imbued her paintings with an intensity of hue previously unseen, contrasting markedly with the low-keyed colouring of the Luxembourg Gardens pictures painted three years before.

'By modernity', Baudelaire wrote in 1863, 'I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable'.⁷³

Through their Impressionist style and sense of movement *Sur la plage* and *Le quai à Dinard* capture this 'modernity', representing the transient rather than the fixed moment manifest in Conder's *A holiday at Mentone*. Motion, transience and mutability, 'the half of art' that Baudelaire's text validates, are articulated in Carrick's images through the swift, energetic brushwork and the changing qualities of light. There is a correlation here between the sense of the expressive and of movement, and of the transformation in Carrick's own life as an expatriate, requiring a 'turning away from questions of her own nationality towards the formation of an

⁷¹ Elizabeth Leigh, 'Life and pictures: Mrs Phillips Fox and her art', in the *Register* (Adelaide), 14 July 1925, p. 4.

⁷² Angela Goddard, p. 149 and Andrew Yip, "'Some settled sunlight': The Foxes in the Orient", in Angela Goddard, pp. 111-15.

⁷³ Charles Baudelaire, p. 13.

improvised, fluid identity'.⁷⁴

In her essay 'Cosmopolitans and expatriates', Australian art historian Georgina Downey poses the question: 'Are the works of Ethel Carrick ... merely depicting, for pleasure's sake that peculiarly Edwardian pursuit of "cultivated recreation"?'⁷⁵ She maintains that the scenes in Carrick's paintings depict a lifestyle only a minority of the population could afford, and raise no questions about the social inequalities or rigid hierarchies of La Belle Époque. But Carrick painted life as she experienced it, from the perspective of the upper middle class. As a woman she was prevented by social propriety from painting subjects dealing with social, economic and political issues, the province of men because of their financial and legal importance. However, works such as *Pumpkin sellers* and *Laveuses Algériennes (Arab women washing clothes in a stream)* c. 1911, the latter painted during Carrick's first painting trip to North Africa, focus on working class women. So too does the group of works depicting flower markets, where class structure is intimated through the boundary established between the plain-featured vendors and their stylish consumers.

Outdoor markets flourished as a result of Haussmann's urban revitalisation program, where the widening of boulevards and the regeneration of parks and squares led to the spread of open spaces for trade in Paris, and which major provincial cities like Nice followed. Markets, perhaps more than most other public outdoor places, are cosmopolitan spaces transcending national boundaries. There, people from different countries interact socially and commercially, with national or cultural traditions maintaining a lesser role. In assimilating her identity, the fluid and dynamic nature of the marketplace presented Carrick with the opportunity to 'claim shared ownership ... [to] employ hybridity as a ... tool for liberation from the domination imposed by bounded definitions of ... nation' and 'to ... deconstruct bounded labels ... and reimagine an interconnected[ness]', to quote Hajar Yazdiha's example of conceptualising hybridity, which I discussed in Chapter 1.⁷⁶ For Carrick the marketplace became the urban equivalent to John Russell's Belle-Île, both artists

⁷⁴ Georgina Downey, 'Cosmopolitans and expatriates', in Angela Goddard, op. cit., p. 59.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

⁷⁶ Hajar Yazdiha, 'Conceptualising hybridity: Deconstructing boundaries through the hybrid', in *Formations* (New York: City University of New York), vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, p. 31–38.

sensing in these locations their ‘being’, who they were as individuals in their cultural and psychological encounter with their adopted homes.



Image 64 Ethel Carrick *Marché aux fleurs, Nice*
(*Flower market, Nice*) c. 1926
Oil on canvas, 60 x 73 cm

The marketplace as a recurring motif in Carrick’s art emerged around 1903–04, and by 1907–08 had become the dominant theme. As with her images of public parks and beaches, flower markets with gatherings of women engaged in social and commercial transactions became the means by which she explored contemporary attitudes to womanhood in the

public sphere. It is interesting that Carrick utilised the ‘flower-woman’ metaphor to do it. As American art historian Annette Stott points out in her essay ‘Floral femininity: A pictorial definition’ (1992),⁷⁷ floral-female paintings encoded a traditional Victorian definition of femininity that large numbers of women were just then stridently challenging. The genre was seen as a conservative response to the ‘new woman’, the ‘flapper’ and their liberal sisters in the face of great societal change. Carrick’s paintings, however, do not uphold this floral type; the flowers are not used to describe and complement their female subjects as shown in the portraits of women and images of women in flower garden settings at the end of the nineteenth century. Rather, they are presented as floral commodities (even if for decorating the home) and thus constitute a response by Carrick to decode femininity beyond the social realm by also imparting economic and personal empowerment to women.

Women occupy entirely the open-air marketplaces depicted in *Dans le marché aux fleurs à Nice* (*In the Nice flower market*) and *Marché aux fleurs, Nice* (*Flower*

⁷⁷ Annette Stott, ‘Floral femininity: A pictorial definition’, in *American Art*, vol. 6, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 60–77.

market, Nice), both painted c. 1926.⁷⁸ Nice was a favourite painting destination for Carrick: such was its importance that in early 1952 she lived briefly in the countryside, close to the city, before returning to Australia where she died some months later. Its vibrant markets encapsulated the image of the changing role of women that Carrick found attractive: contemporary life captured out-of-doors in a cosmopolitan social space that transcended gender divides. Although most women were still housewives in the mid 1920s, they were not content just to stay at home. A growing number joined the workforce, wore clothing more convenient for outdoor activity, divorced; ‘flappers’ and other independent women smoked in public, drove automobiles and were sexually liberated. The woman dressed in the sleeveless, loose-fitting dress and wide-brimmed sunhat in *Marché aux fleurs, Nice* was doubtless part of this new breed of young Western woman in the 1920s.

Carrick’s paintings of parks, beaches and markets contest the conventional notion of the gendered separation of spheres, an ideology that Impressionism endorsed. They disclose that women as well as men occupied public outdoor spaces in a period of transition that saw outmoded traditions and beliefs overtaken by the progress and greater freedoms that modernity created. Carrick’s position is vividly expressed in *La marée haute à St Malo (High tide at St Malo)* c. 1911–12,⁷⁹ depicting sightseers to the ancient fortified town in Brittany as they file between rows of changing booths, the small beach shrunk by the encroaching tide. Carrick’s focus here is less on contested space than on the public sphere as shared communal space, where the participants of both genders enjoy a pleasant seaside outing.

Carrick’s Achievements

Carrick is generally perceived as having worked in the shadow of E. Phillips Fox. Following a common path for artists’ widows, after Fox’s premature death Carrick campaigned tirelessly on behalf of her late husband’s reputation.⁸⁰ Indicative of the

⁷⁸ The paintings are in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, respectively.

⁷⁹ Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁸⁰ For example, in 1916 following Fox’s death in the previous year Carrick organised a retrospective of his work at Melbourne’s Athenaeum Hall; in the 1920s she submitted paintings by Fox to the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris; and in 1925 donated his *Rêverie* 1903 to the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, which assigned it in 1977 to the Musée d’Orsay.

era, Carrick was attentive to his legacy to the point where, in 1925, she stated publicly, 'I want to lay stress on his work, which is so much the greater; my work is nothing in comparison with his'.⁸¹ Carrick was not being obsequious in her self-critical remark; she genuinely admired and was committed to Fox as his equal, her early widowhood causing her to re-evaluate her life as a single woman.

Throughout her long career as an expatriate Carrick worked assiduously, both producing an extensive oeuvre and maintaining a vigorous exhibitions program to promote it. Britain, France, and Australia,⁸² the three countries with which she closely connected culturally and artistically, were her focus. In her primary cultural context of Paris, until the outbreak of war in 1939 Carrick showed regularly at the progressive Salon d'Automne (becoming a *sociétaire* in 1911 and a *juré de sélection* in 1912) and also the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, both of which were key facilitators in marketing her work in France as well as internationally. As a supporter of the feminist cause, Carrick became actively involved in women's artist groups, serving as vice-president of the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs (International Union of Women Painters and Sculptors)⁸³ and exhibiting with Les Quelques. In 1928 she was awarded a *diplôme d'honneur* at the International Exhibition of Bordeaux and the French government purchased *Le marché aux fleurs à Nice* (*The flower market in Nice*) c. 1928, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen.

Like Goodsir, Carrick did not achieve the same level of success as the four male case studies, both her gender and peripatetic lifestyle working against her. Men held primary power in the influential Parisian art world, whose acceptance was critical to the establishment of careers and recognition of talents and which deliberately disadvantaged women. Goodsir's exclusion was more marked than Carrick's because she was also single and gay. It could be argued, however, that the constraints of patriarchy and social bigotry concerning sexual difference emboldened strong-

⁸¹ Elizabeth Leigh, p. 4.

⁸² For a full listing of Carrick's solo, joint (with E. Philips Fox) and group exhibitions see Angela Goddard, pp. 161–63 and John Pigot, *Capturing the Orient: Hilda Rix Nicholas and Ethel Carrick* (Melbourne: Waverley City Gallery), 1993, pp. 25–27.

⁸³ The French sculptor and women's rights activist Hélène Bertaux founded the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs in 1881. She served as its first president until 1894, when she took up the cause for women gaining admission to the École des Beaux-Arts.

minded women like Carrick and Goodsir to be more focused and diligent in their quest to achieve equality with male artists.

Bunny connected with the emerging new middle-class patronage of La Belle-Époque in Paris, as did George Coates and Bertram Mackennal in Edwardian London, but this was unthinkable for Carrick and Goodsir because of the social restrictions on women's mobility. Instead, Carrick forged strong connections with fellow artists, including many Australians, which may account for her never suffering the posthumous obscurity in this country that was experienced by both Agnes Goodsir and George Coates.⁸⁴

Carrick's paintings of liberated womanhood in public outdoor space counterbalance those of Rupert Bunny, whose imagery of languorous semi-clothed women absorbed in reverie in fashionable Parisian bathhouses and drawing rooms interiorise the *luxe* of La Belle-Époque. Not unlike Agnes Goodsir, Bunny depicted women in contained spaces, and when he portrayed them out-of-doors they were usually within enclosed private gardens or sheltered below trees or under parasols. Where Goodsir was protecting her lesbian lifestyle by portraying Cherry in interior space, Bunny was preserving male authority by signifying care and protection of 'the weaker sex'. Conversely, Carrick exteriorised womanhood as a new platform for asserting female authority, her paintings of feminised public outdoor space the means by which she expressed it.

The 1979 retrospective 'Ethel Carrick (Mrs E. Phillips Fox)' generated a strong revival of interest in Carrick's work⁸⁵ paralleling the revitalisation of Australian women's art more generally in that decade, a response to the global feminist campaign for greater recognition of women. It was, however, the more critical 2011 exhibition 'Art, Love and Life: Ethel Carrick and E. Phillips Fox' that generated most interest in the artist.⁸⁶ This project revealed the intimate connection between the art of Carrick and Fox that has rarely been matched between partners in Australian

⁸⁴ Both became estranged from their homeland a decade or so before their deaths abroad, which ultimately distanced them from the Australian art world

⁸⁵ The exhibition was curated by Margaret Rich and shown at the Geelong Art Gallery from 30 March–4 May 1979; then toured to the S. H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney, 11 May–3 June; and the University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, 13 June–5 July.

⁸⁶ The exhibition was held at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane from 16 April–7 August 2011.

art. It examined Carrick's oeuvre through close scrutiny of some fifty-four works, beginning with *Pumpkin sellers* c. 1903–04 and concluding with *Australian gum blossom* c. 1940s. The exhibition presented Carrick as an immensely talented artist, both more modern and more adventurous than Fox. Yet in the 'new arguments about Australian art and collections',⁸⁷ of the two painters Fox remains triumphant, perpetuating Australia's long tradition of giving precedence to masculine culture.⁸⁸

On careful examination of the paintings of Carrick during the period 1906–26 – with their broken brushwork, intense colours and focus on contemporary outdoor life – it is apparent that she situated herself within an adapted global 'World Impressionism',⁸⁹ espousing variants of the French mode with British and Australian inflections. In the 1910s and 1920s Impressionism was no longer a radical movement, and Carrick tailored its principles to suit her own times. Within the context of Australian artists working in a wider world during the early twentieth century, the milieu with which she is often associated and against which she is critically assessed, Carrick's paintings appear remarkably fresh and vibrant, the subject matter of women socialising and working in the public sphere filled with contemporaneity and *joie de vivre*. She saw women through a fresh lens, her lively glimpses offering the opportunity to partake in the experience of the transformation that modernised their lives and her life as an advocate of gender equality.

⁸⁷ This term is taken from Jaynie Anderson's foreword in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, op. cit., p. ix. In the book, Carrick is mentioned in passing in the chapter titled 'Buying and selling Australian art: A brief historical survey' (Wally Caruana and Jane Clark), p. 296, while Fox is confidently embraced in two chapters, 'National life and landscape: The Heidelberg School as mythmaker, 1880–1905' (Ann Galbally), pp. 71 and 76 and 'Australian artists within a wider world, 1900–1930' (Anne Gray), pp. 85 and 87. Carrick receives much the same treatment in Sasha Grishin's *Australian Art: A History* (Melbourne: Miegunyah), 2014, where she is mentioned parenthetically with regard to her marriage to Fox, p. 153 and her theosophical associations and promoting her late husband's work, p. 155. In contrast, Fox is comprehensively documented, pp. 152–55.

⁸⁸ See Geert Hofstede's comparative intercultural research in *Cultures Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organisations Across Nations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage), 2001. Here, Hofstede explains his model of 'dimensions' of national culture and presents country comparisons structured around six major dimensions: power distance; individualism; masculinity versus femininity; uncertainty avoidance; pragmatism; and indulgence. Australian culture through the lens of the six-dimensional model is assessed as being strongly masculine, which is reflected in much of the existing literature on Australian art.

⁸⁹ The pioneering American feminist scholar and specialist in nineteenth-century French painting, Norma Broude coined the term 'World Impressionism'. See Norma Broude (ed.), *World Impressionism: The International Movement, 1860–1920* (New York: Abrams), 1990, p. 5.

Summary

In this chapter I have focused on Carrick's painting career from 1905 to 1914, embracing her British and early French and Australian experiences. This decade was crucial in shaping both her outlook on life and art. Her English art training with teachers who were Paris-trained acted as an important catalyst for her expatriatism. As a past expatriate in France, Fox gave vital encouragement to Carrick, particularly during this vital assimilative phase. Their artistic marriage lasted a little over a decade, but it was central to her art, establishing a foundation for major creativity over some four decades.

Carrick's progressiveness challenged the old hierarchy of gendered spheres. Baron Haussmann's mid nineteenth-century transformation of Paris, with its new and refurbished public outdoor spaces, offered unprecedented opportunity for artists to work *en plein air*. Urban parks and marketplaces and the beaches of northern France became Carrick's artistic focus, and she challenged their patriarchal intent by claiming them for women in paintings lively in their vibrant impressionistic style. The notion of spatial inversion is a subject hitherto unacknowledged in relation to Carrick's art. As this chapter demonstrates, it was a significant development and signalled her modernist agenda in employing the expressive authority of painting to articulate her beliefs. The images of public outdoor spaces are part of Carrick's self-definition as an artist, which feminism, modernity and cultural hybridity underpinned.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the issue of expatriatism as a new platform for shaping Australian artistic practice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through a case study of six artists: Rupert Bunny, Ethel Carrick, George Coates, Agnes Goodsir, Bertram Mackennal and John Russell. The leading international art centres of Paris and London provided the cultural context for the investigation. Like artists from around the world, these resourceful young Australians (or British-Australian in the case of Carrick) travelled abroad to deepen their experiences beyond the restraints of colonial culture. Unlike the majority, who failed in their attempts at expatriatism because they could not meet the cultural challenges, these six practitioners assimilated into their host cultures either long term or permanently. Their lengthy engagement with the wider world demonstrated their ability to adapt and move forward in their adopted homelands, utilising cultural hybridity as the key.

The collective experiences of the case studies articulate a rich and diverse history, which past accounts of Australian art have largely overlooked since expatriatism did not fit within their prescribed narrative. The recent revisionist writings of researchers such as Rex Butler and A. D. S. Donaldson in their history of ‘unAustralian’ art have vigorously embraced expatriatism as central to the account. This dissertation may be seen as augmenting their study in the context of Australian artists within a wider world, a milieu that, as art museum scholar Anne Gray points out, ‘played a crucial part in the maturation of Australian art’.¹ Australian artists ‘who carried the flag overseas’ were generally thought to have ‘lost direction and become unsatisfactory cultural hybrids’.² This study, however, has shown that the dynamic interaction of cultures was clearly advantageous, allowing the artists to exploit their assimilated homes as reconstituted sites and to establish and pursue significant careers in an internationally contested environment.

Each of the artists brought to expatriatism a distinctive perspective, a complex mix of

¹ Anne Gray, ‘Australian artists within a wider world, 1900–1930’, in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press), 2011, p. 96.

² Anne Galbally, ‘Reflected selves: Australian expatriate artists in an Edwardian world’, in Anne Gray, *The Edwardians: Secrets and Desires* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), 2004, p. 107.

their Australian past, the various expectations of what living and working in a foreign country involved, and their experiences once having settled. The transition from home to adopted culture was personally demanding, with each artist's ability to overcome the psychological, cultural and territorial challenges showing them to be admirable flagbearers abroad. While some of these artists moved between cities and across nations before settling permanently, others adjusted to their new milieus more rapidly. Each negotiated their expatriate position differently, their connections and affinities with the host society proving crucial to their integration. As cultural hybrids, these artists were part insider and part outsider, a complex relationship manifesting itself in different ways. Mackennal, for example, assimilated into the local culture by identifying with the establishment, which brought British insider success, while Russell negotiated expatriatism as an outsider by seeking refuge on the remote island of Belle-Île, from where he articulated the experience through paintings of expressive vitality.

Despite Bertram Mackennal's initial unsettledness before establishing his career in London, with Rupert Bunny in Paris he became Australia's most prolific artist working in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. Overcoming the rigid English class system, Mackennal connected with the social elite using the authority of the Royal Academy and New Sculpture movement to establish a strategic path that steered him to the very heart of London's art world, leading to ambitious civic sculptures and stately monuments to British royalty. His vital and lifelike equestrian statue of King Edward VII at St James's in London, and the dignified tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in St George's Chapel at Windsor, indicate the new direction British sculpture had taken by the 1910s and Mackennal's importance as one of its chief exponents. Bunny employed the French middle class as both subjects and patrons for his art, lavishly celebrating modern French femininity through contrasting imagery, one set within an Arcadian realm encompassing women lazing in Parisian bathhouses and drawing rooms or on balconies, the other of dynamic figures invigorated by the power of the modernist productions of Ballets Russes. Immersing themselves in the cosmopolitan cultures of their adopted cities, Mackennal in London and Bunny in Paris imported the latest artistic tendencies, their cross-cultural construction becoming a potent influence on their work.

John Russell favoured the seclusion of Belle-Île to the urbanity of Paris, the house he built atop a cliff overlooking Port Goulphar on the windswept La Côte Sauvage forming the focus of his remarkable artistic journey between 1888 and 1908. In the isolation and rugged beauty of this ‘wild coast’ Russell discovered something resembling Martin Heidegger’s philosophical notion of ‘being and place’, a heightened self-awareness of his affinity with this iconic landscape. Motifs of dramatic cliffs, rocks, waves and storms, expressed in vibrant colours and brushwork, became the means of articulating his vision through painting. As with Monet, whom Russell met on Belle-Île in 1886, his time there proved pivotal, confirming that representation of the motif was not enough, that ‘what exists between the motif and myself’³ was the true aesthetic imperative, authenticating his ‘being’ on La Côte Sauvage.

George Coates saw expatriatism as an unprecedented opportunity to launch his career in London, a world city renowned for its time-honoured portrait tradition, a genre he excelled in early. Coates was a cultural outsider with strong Australian egalitarian values, readily connecting with Edwardians on the periphery. Achievers in the public realm but distinct from its mainstream, these independent and unconventional individuals became the principal subjects of Coates’s portraiture, an art devoid of much of the contrived opulence and luxury that conformist Edwardian painting represented. As an expatriate Coates strongly identified with his sitters, establishing a relationship with them that was not unlike his own cultural connection with Britain, a fusion of the private and public spheres. This synthesis imparts to his portraits a compelling authority authenticating the ‘individualism’ that empowers them.

Patriarchal society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries privileged male artists and the cultural milieus of Paris and London endorsed this, with institutional teaching, the private dealer-exhibition society nexus, the major market-place venues such as the Salons and Royal Academy and the subject matter of art itself sanctioned by male authority. Both female artists in this study, Agnes Goodsir and Ethel Carrick, challenged patriarchy by adopting feminist or, more accurately,

³ Quoted in Ursula Prunster, ‘Painting Belle-Île’, in Ursula Prunster, *Belle-Île: Monet, Russell & Matisse in Brittany* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales), 2001, p. 20.

protofeminist positions.⁴ Prevailing gendered boundaries impelled them to respond to expatriatism differently in their art than did their male counterparts, with both adopting a progressive approach, especially with regard to the subject and how it was represented. Carrick skilfully inverted the ‘sphere of femininity’ by painting the world of women in public outdoor spaces, traditionally the sphere of masculinity, asserting her authority by pictorially destabilising these sites. Goodsir’s depictions of her female lover Rachel Dunn (‘Cherry’) also defied artistic convention since androgyny had been an image rendered traditionally by men. Her lesbianism, although discreetly masked, worked in her favour endorsing unconventionality and independence from patriarchy. By focusing on these two female painters, this thesis draws attention to the important role women played in Australian expatriate art at the turn of the twentieth century.

Bunny, Mackennal and Russell all married women from their adopted cultures, and Goodsir’s partner was American with British connections. British-born Carrick married the Australian E. Phillips Fox. Dora Meeson, the wife of Coates, was Australian, with strong links to New Zealand and England. Expatriatism played a key role in establishing and fostering these partnerships, the ‘significant other’ continuously encouraging and supportive of his or her artistic partner. The power of identifying oneself mentally and physically with, and so fully comprehending, a person or place was intrinsic to the expatriatism of each of the six case studies. Their ability to connect with an adopted home, whether London, Paris or remote Belle-Île, generated new opportunities to embrace dual cultures as well as an ‘assimilated self’.

The past failure of Australian art history to acknowledge the overseas achievements of these artists as a critical part of the home narrative has been to its detriment. The accounts of earlier writers such as William Moore, Bernard Smith and Robert Hughes were written at a time when Australia remained relatively remote from the rest of the world. Until the mid 1960s, its focus was principally Britain and its history was conveyed from a quasi-Anglocentric perspective. Past painters and sculptors who went abroad were considered part of a separate story, one that was unconnected with the Australian chronicle. Smith suggested in his seminal 1962

⁴ I use the term ‘protofeminist’ in a philosophical tradition to suggest a woman anticipating modern feminist concepts but who lived in an era when the term ‘feminist’ was essentially unknown.

survey *Australian Painting 1788-1960* that ‘the artists who left Australia in those Indian summer years of the nineteenth century’ did not bring back ‘much of lasting value to Australia’.⁵ Since then, the cultural context in which Australian artists have operated has significantly changed. They now work within a globalised world where a cosmopolitan, cross-cultural approach is central to the cultural experience. Reflecting this transformation contemporary cultural theorists and art historians such as Rex Butler and Anne Gray have spearheaded the reassessment of Australian art history, their writings over the past decade recognising the importance of expatriatism for Australian art. This reshaped narrative reflects the greater interest now than in the past in a more inclusive national identity – one that embraces the overseas experience (of both expatriate and émigré artists) as an essential element of what it means to be Australian in the twenty-first century. This thesis redresses earlier accounts by demonstrating that expatriatism was vital to the cultural continuum of Australian art during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This thesis also has relevance for the subsequent generations of artists who travelled to Europe (Sidney Nolan, Jeffrey Smart, Norma Redpath et al.) or turned to America, such as Clement Meadmore and Denise Green, as well as for the current generation, which has established itself throughout the world, with Asia an important destination following Australia’s reorientation to this region in the 1990s. Examining expatriatism from the expatriate’s perspective through the cultural, psychological and territorial imperatives driving it, as this thesis has done, is vital for a more inclusive account contrasting with past narratives that have presented it through a restrictive Australian lens.

Studying expatriatism from ‘within’, as it were, has the advantage of engaging with the subject more authentically, from an experiential position, without losing sight of the theoretical underpinning. The concepts of interculturalism and cultural hybridity championed by contemporary theorists Gérard Bouchard, Homi Bhabha, Hajar Yazdiha and Montserrat Guibernau have supported my analysis of the expatriate experience, highlighting the key argument that expatriatism for the artists in this case study resulted in a cosmopolitan outlook which transcended national boundaries –

⁵ Quoted in Bernard Smith’s updated *Australian Painting 1788-1970*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), 1971, p. 165.

that is, a melding of cultures to produce a 'third space'.

At its simplest expatriatism is a state or condition of 'being-in-the-world', not unlike Martin Heidegger's notion of *dasein*, exemplified in John Russell's encounter on Belle-Île. Looking out from his 'English castle' across the bay of Port Goulphar to the vast ocean beyond, in the headland and marine formations before him Russell detected a sense of home, the family and homeland that he had left behind, but which expatriatism re-established as part of the identity of self as 'Other'. Distinctly French in focus but preserving Australianness, cultural fusion became for Russell, as for the other five case studies, his assimilated 'being'. As well as influencing the careers and works of the selected artists, expatriatism became a new platform for shaping Australian art itself, which the newly constructed 'UnAustralian' history underpins and this thesis enhances.

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Illustrations

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4. Rupert Bunny (1864-1947) *Tritons* c. 1890, oil on canvas, 80.5 x 150.5 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
5. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98) *Le pauvre pêcheur (The poor fisherman)* 1881, oil on canvas, 155 x 192.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
6. Rupert Bunny *Mer idylle (Sea idyll)* c. 1890, oil on canvas, 100.5 x 161.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
7. Rupert Bunny *Pastorale* c. 1893, oil on canvas, 142 x 251 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
8. Rupert Bunny *Endormies (Sleeping)* c. 1904, oil on canvas, 130.5 x 200.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
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14. Rupert Bunny *Fresque (Fresco)* c. 1921, colour monotype, sheet 29 x 28 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
15. John Russell, c. 1883
16. John Russell (1858-1930) *Pivoines et tête d'une femme (Peonies and head of a woman)* 1887, oil on canvas, 40.5 x 65 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
17. John Russell's house and studio overlooking Port Goulphar, c. 1900
18. John Russell *La voile rouge, Port de Goulphar (The red sail, Port Goulphar)* c. 1890, oil on canvas, 65 x 80 cm, Musée de Morlaix, Brittany

19. John Russell *Bateaux de pêche, Port de Goulphar* (*Fishing boats, Port Goulphar*) c. 1896-1908, watercolour, coloured chalks and graphite, sheet 47 x 60 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
20. John Russell *Aiguilles de Port-Coton, Belle-Île*, (*Port Coton Needles, Belle-Île*) c. 1900, oil on canvas, 61 x 50.5 cm, Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth
21. John Russell *Mer agitée, Belle-Île* (*Rough sea, Belle-Île*) 1900, oil on canvas, 63 x 63 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
22. John Russell *Tempête, Belle-Île* (*Storm, Belle-Île*) 1905, watercolour and gouache, sheet 25.5 x 32.5 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
23. John Russell *La Pointe de Morestil par mer calme* (*Calm sea at Morestil Point*) 1901, oil on canvas, 61 x 95 cm, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
24. Claude Monet (1840-1926) *Grotte de Port-Domois* (*Cave at Port Domois*) 1886, oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm, Museum of Modern Art, Ibaraki, Japan
25. John Russell *Roc Toul (Roche Guibel)* (*Toul Rock (Guibel Rock)*) 1904-05, oil on canvas, 98.5 x 128 cm, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
26. John Russell *Madame Russell parmi les fleurs dans la baie au jardin de Goulphar, Belle-Île* (*Mrs Russell among the flowers in the bay of the garden of Goulphar, Belle-Île*) 1907, oil on canvas, 80.5 x 100 cm, Musée de Morlaix, Brittany
27. George Coates, 1913
28. George Coates (1869-1930) *Arthur Walker and his brother, Harold* (*The Walker brothers*) c. 1912, oil on canvas, 158.5 x 130.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
29. George Coates *Lady Courtney of Penwith* 1912, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, Family of the late Sir Richard Holt, 1st Baronet, Liverpool
30. George Coates *The Spanish dancer* 1911-12, oil on canvas, 162.5 x 105 cm, present whereabouts unknown
31. George Coates *A Russian lady* 1919, oil on canvas, 128 x 102.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
32. George Coates *A Belgian lady* 1929-30, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 62 cm, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine
33. George Coates *Lady Forbes-Robertson and her daughter, Jean* 1925, oil on canvas, 127.5 x 102.5 cm, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo
34. George Coates *Mary Stormont* mid 1920s, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown,

Rye Art Gallery, Rye

35. Bertram Mackennal, c. 1925
36. Bertram Mackennal (1863-1931) *Circe* 1893, cast bronze, 240 x 79.5 x 93.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
37. Bertram Mackennal *Melba* 1899, carved marble, 198.5 x 61.5 x 61.5 cm with plinth, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
38. Bertram Mackennal *The earth and the elements* 1907, carved marble, 63.5 x 32 x 32 cm, Tate Britain, London
39. Bertram Mackennal *Diana wounded* 1907-08, carved marble, 147.5 x 82 x 62 cm, Tate Britain, London
40. Bertram Mackennal *Memorial to King Edward VII* 1911-21, cast bronze equestrian statue, 480 cm in height, Waterloo Place, St James's, London
41. Bertram Mackennal *Tomb of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra* 1910-27, dated 1919, white marble recumbent figures on black and green marble sarcophagus, with four polychrome bronze female allegorical figures, four gilt-bronze royal shields and decorative bronze panels, 150 x 240 x 130 cm, St George's Chapel, Windsor
42. Postcard of King Edward VII and his fox terrier, Caesar
43. Agnes Goodsir, c. 1927
44. Agnes Goodsir (1864-1939) *La femme de ménage (The housekeeper)* 1905, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 48 cm, Private collection
45. Agnes Goodsir *Woman reading* c. 1915, oil on canvas, 71 x 91.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
46. Rachel Dunn and Agnes Goodsir, c. 1920
47. Agnes Goodsir *Le chapeau bleu (Blue hat)* c. 1920, oil on canvas, 91 x 73 cm, Private collection
48. Romaine Brooks (1874-1970) *Autoportrait (Self-portrait)* 1923, oil on canvas, 117.5 x 68.5 cm, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC
49. Agnes Goodsir *Femme à la cigarette (Woman smoking)* 1922, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, Private collection
50. Agnes Goodsir *The Parisienne* c. 1924, oil on canvas, 61 x 50 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
51. Agnes Goodsir *Type de Quartier Latin (Type of the Latin Quarter)* c. 1926, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, Private collection

52. Agnes Goodsir *Woman with a cigarette* c. 1925, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo
53. Ethel Carrick, c. 1912
54. Ethel Carrick (1872-1952) *Pumpkin sellers* c. 1903-04, oil on wood panel, 22 x 30.5 cm, Private collection, Melbourne
55. Berthe Morisot (1841-95) *Sur l'herbe (On the grass)* 1874, coloured pastels, sheet dimensions unknown, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris
56. Berthe Morisot *Un jour d'été (Summer's day)* c. 1879, oil on canvas, 45 x 72.5 cm, National Gallery, London
57. Ethel Carrick *Corrida à Biarritz (Bullfight at Biarritz)* c. 1908, oil on canvas, 38.5 x 45.5 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
58. Ethel Carrick *Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris (Luxembourg Gardens, Paris)* c. 1906, oil on wood panel, 26.5 x 35 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
59. Ethel Carrick *Scène de parc, Paris (Park scene, Paris)* 1906, oil on artists' board, 26.5 x 35 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
60. Ethel Carrick *Scène de plage (Beach scene)* c. 1909, oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, 38 x 55.5 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
61. Ethel Carrick *Sur la plage (On the beach)* c. 1909, oil on canvas, 36 x 42 cm, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
62. Charles Conder (1868-1909) *A holiday at Mentone* 1888, oil on canvas, 46 x 61 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
63. Ethel Carrick *Le quai à Dinard (The quay at Dinard)* c. 1911-12, oil on canvas mounted on plywood, 71 x 91 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
64. Ethel Carrick *Marché aux fleurs, Nice (Flower market, Nice)* c. 1926, oil on canvas, 60 x 73 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney